



# PROJECT FEET

## FAMILY-ENGAGED EDUCATIONAL TRAINING



## TAKING STEPS TO BUILD MEANINGFUL FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

Dr. Sara Kupzyk

Dr. Apryl Poch

Kupzyk, S., & Poch, A. (2023, December). Family engaged educational training project (Project FEET):

Taking steps to build meaningful family-school partnerships. Family Handouts.

**Note: These materials were developed by Drs. Sara Kupzyk and Apryl Poch at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO). The development of these materials was funded by a grant from the Nebraska Council for Developmental Disabilities, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). However, the contents do not necessarily represent the views or opinions of UNO or the policy of the DHHS.**

Visit the Project FEET website to access all of the materials.  
<https://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-arts-and-sciences/psychology/academics/family-engaged/index.php>



Note to access the videos and links included in the modules, visit this page:  
[https://www.canva.com/design/DAFw6hwqMOg/ygEWGwJNtkN6L1Rs5NHO9A/view?utm\\_content=DAFw6hwqMOg&utm\\_campaign=designshare&utm\\_medium=link&utm\\_source=editor](https://www.canva.com/design/DAFw6hwqMOg/ygEWGwJNtkN6L1Rs5NHO9A/view?utm_content=DAFw6hwqMOg&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=editor)



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<https://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-arts-and-sciences/psychology/academics/family-engaged/fe-resources.php>



# Family Engagement in Education

## What is Family Engagement?

Family engagement involves teachers and related service providers partnering with families to:

- Learn about each other to maximize what each person brings to the team.
- Make decisions about what important goals are for a child.
- Make decisions about supports that are likely to be helpful for the child.
- Keep open back-and-forth communication.
- Share successes.
- Problem solve challenges.



## Why is Family Engagement Important?

Family engagement is important because children spend almost 80% of their time outside of school. Families are their child's first teachers and bring a wealth of information to the team. Family engagement is related to improvements for:

- The Child - improved grades, achievement, social skills, and attitudes about learning
- Families - increased self-confidence and trust in schools
- Teachers - higher expectations for student learning, improved communication and problem resolution, less tension between families and schools

## What Steps Can I take to Increase Engagement?

- Get to know your child's teacher and related service providers.
- Share the goals you have for your child and what is important to your family.
- Share ways that work best for you to communicate.
- Actively listen to others and be open to problem solving.
- Tell teachers or related service providers what you appreciate about them. and share ways you notice your child is improving.

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“Family engagement is about building a relationship to support students”

# Funds of Knowledge: Knowledge, Skills, and Experiences we Bring to the Team



## Values and Traditions

Your paragraph text



## Activities

Your paragraph text



## Friends and Family

Your paragraph text



## Language Family Occupations

Your paragraph text



## Likes/Dislikes

Your paragraph text



## What has worked/ Not Worked

Your paragraph text

# All About my Child



Name/Nickname:



Birthday:



Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

Parent email:



Parent phone:



Preferred way to communication:



What are 3 of (Child's name's) favorites things?



1.

2.



3.



One thing that I want everyone to know about (Child's name) is:

(Child's name) has (disability), for (him/her/them) that means:

What is something that makes (Child's name) unique?

(Child's name) is really great at:

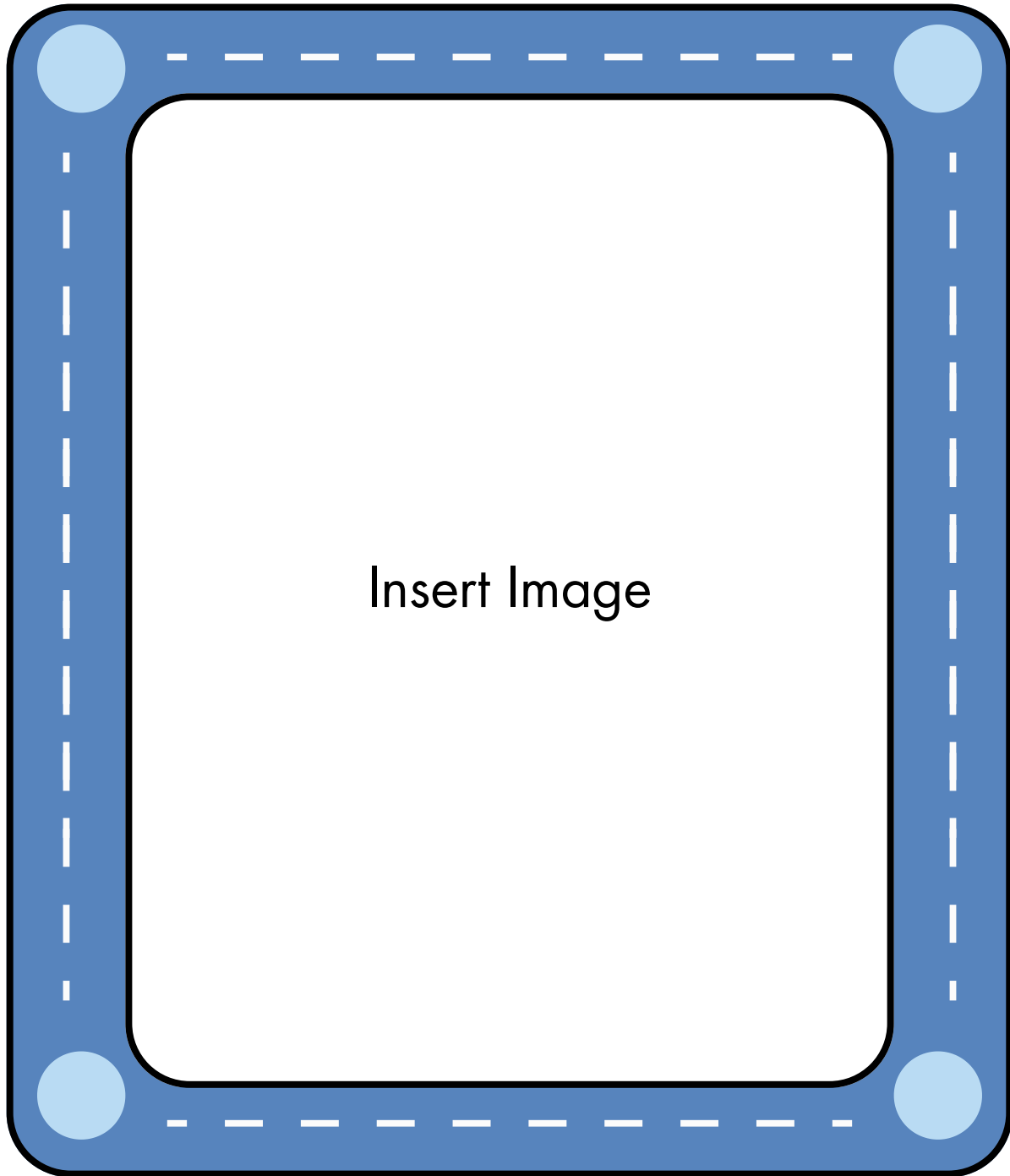
(Child's name) does not like when:

To work well with (Child's name), it is important to:

One goal we have for this year is:

This goal is important because:

**My name is** \_\_\_\_\_



**And I** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **What this Disability Looks Like for Me:**

- 
- 
- 

## **Important Medical Information:**

- 
- 
- 

## **Ways I Best Communicate:**

- 
- 
- 

## **My Talents, Preferences and Things I Like:**

- 
- 
- 

## **Dislikes, Fears, or Triggers:**

- 
- 
- 

## **Tips for Ways to Support Me:**

- 
- 
-



# HOPES AND DREAMS ROADMAP

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Think about your hopes and dreams for your child and what is important to your family. Write down the top long-term goals you have. As your child gets older, ask them what they would like to be able to do. You might add goals about academics, behavior, independent living, employment, or other areas important to you and your child. Keep this as a roadmap.

At each Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting, you can use this to see:

1. How the annual goals will help you get closer to the long-term goals.
2. How much closer you are to reaching the goals.

We cannot predict the future, but by planning and checking in as a team, we are more likely to achieve our goals.

|                                                                                     |               |           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
|   | <b>Goal 1</b> | <b>01</b> |
|                                                                                     | Write goal    |           |
| <hr/>                                                                               |               |           |
|  | <b>Goal 2</b> | <b>02</b> |
|                                                                                     | Write goal    |           |
| <hr/>                                                                               |               |           |
|  | <b>Goal 3</b> | <b>03</b> |
|                                                                                     | Write goal    |           |
| <hr/>                                                                               |               |           |
|  | <b>Goal 4</b> | <b>04</b> |
|                                                                                     | Write goal    |           |

# Who is part of an Individualized Education Program Team?



**Family:**  
Experts on their child's history, culture, what they are good at and their needs



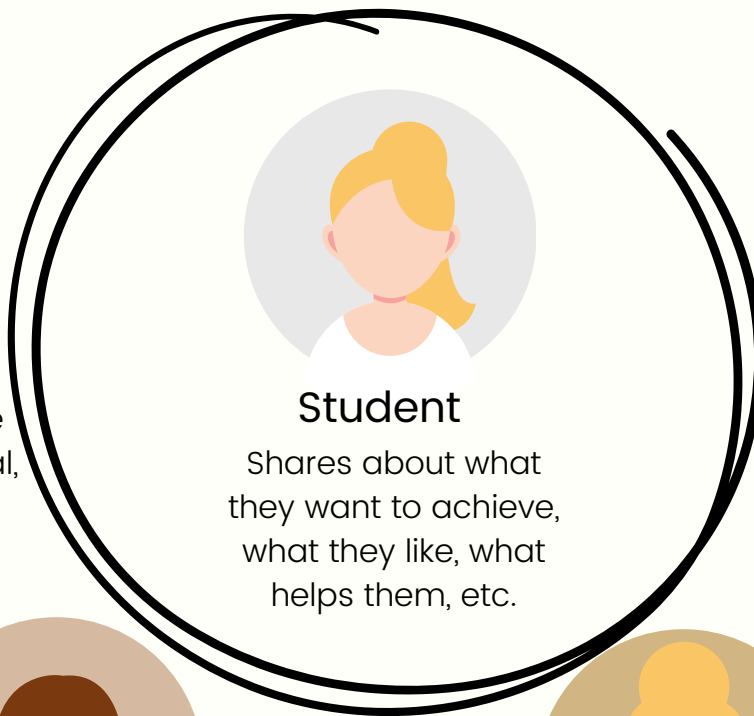
**Special Education Teacher:**  
Shares about how supports are being provided to help meet the goals and progress toward goals



**General Education Teacher:**  
Shares about the classroom curriculum and support for individualizing the curriculum



Sometimes related service providers who offer physical, occupational, speech, or behavioral therapy

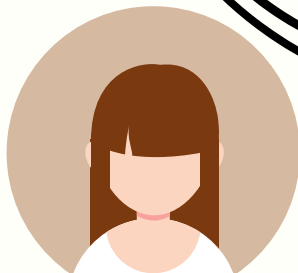


## Student

Shares about what they want to achieve, what they like, what helps them, etc.



**Testing expert:**  
School psychologist or others who interpret and explain evaluation results

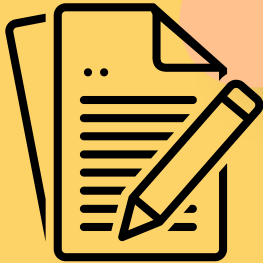


**School administrator or representative of the school system:**  
Shares information about school resources and has the authority to commit to resources and make sure services are provided as they are described in the IEP



**Others might include:**  
school nurse, interpreter, person invited by family

# Tips to Get Ready for an Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meeting



Request a copy of the IEP to look over before the meeting

- Look through each section of the IEP and make notes of questions you have.
- Ask to meet with a member of the school team if you have questions before the meeting.



Review Your Hopes and Dreams Roadmap

Think about...

- How much closer are we to reaching the goals?  
Do we need to make changes to our roadmap?
- Will the annual goals help you get closer to the long-term goals?



Make a list of your top 3 successes for the year and top 3 goals

- Making a list of successes can help the team to take time to celebrate progress.
- Making a list of goals can help you share with the team what is important to you and your family.

Decide if you want to invite someone to go to the meeting with you

- You can bring a family member, friend, or someone else with expertise about your child to the meeting. Let the team know who you plan to bring.
- Having someone you are comfortable with there might help you feel more comfortable. Share with the person what happens at the meeting and what you are hoping they can do to support you.

# Individualized Education Program (IEP) Planning



## Top 3 Successes of the Year

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



## Top 3 Goals for the Year

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



## Questions for the Team



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## Other Notes



# Special Education

## Process

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- 1**
  - The child is referred for evaluation because of a concern.
  - Parent is asked for permission (also called consent) to do the evaluation.

- 2**
  - An evaluation is done that looks at all of the areas where there was a concern.
  - Information is often gathered at school and from families.



- 3**
  - Results of the evaluation are shared with the multidisciplinary team (MDT) to see if the child is eligible for special education.
  - Families are an important part of the team and can agree or disagree with the results.
  - If a parent disagrees, they can request an independent evaluation.

- 4**
  - If the child is eligible for services, then an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is made by the team.
  - Families can get a copy of the IEP before the meeting.
  - Families can share their goals and ideas on how to support their child.
  - Families can bring other people to the meeting to share their expertise about the child.

- 5**
  - The IEP is implemented and followed at the school.
  - Teachers, related service providers and families all support the plan.
  - Progress is shared at least as often as it is for other students, usually 4 times per year.



- 6**
  - The IEP is reviewed and updated at least one time per year.
  - Families can request an IEP meeting at any time.
  - A re-evaluation is done every 3 years to see if the child is still eligible for special education (unless the team decides it is not needed).

Note: Schools are required to provide translation or interpretation from appropriate and competent individuals

# NAVIGATING THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM PROCESS

## WHAT IS AN INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM?

An IEP is a legal document that includes:

- The disability verification
- How the child is currently doing with academics, development, behavior, and function.
- Annual goals set by the IEP team
- How progress will be measured
- Related services provided to support the child
- Accommodations and modifications
- Time in the general education classroom
- Special education services
- When, where, how often, and how long services will be given
- A plan to support the child's transition to life after high school

- The first IEP meeting must happen within 30 days after the child is found eligible for special education services
- The IEP must be reviewed and revised every year and a comprehensive re-evaluation done every 3 years unless the IEP team decides it is not necessary

## WHO IS ON THE IEP TEAM?

Student can share how they learn best and advocate for themselves

Parents/Guardians experts on their child's history, culture, what they are good at, and their needs

General education teachers can share about the classroom curriculum and support individualizing the curriculum

Special education teacher can share about how supports are being provided to help meet the goals and progress with goals

Testing expert to interpret and explain evaluation results (may be a school psychologist or other expert)

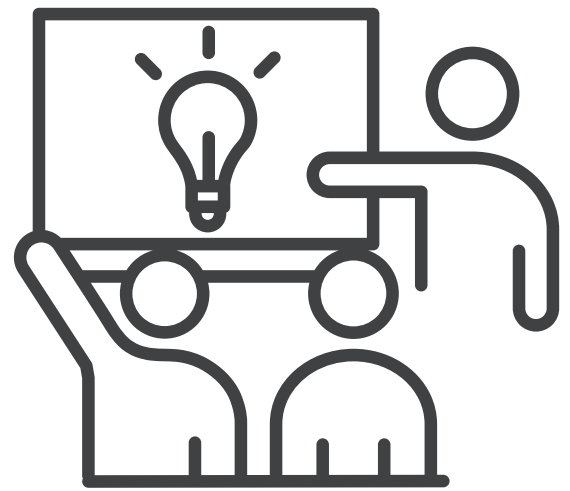
School administrator or representative of the school system can share information about school resources and has the authority to commit to resources and make sure services are provided as they are described in the IEP

Others:

- Related service providers
- School nurse
- Interpreter
- Person invited by the family - this could be an advocate, family friend, neighbor, therapist for support or to share their expertise about the child

## WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE IEP MEETING?

- The family receives a draft of the IEP before the meeting to review
- The IEP team reviews and develops each part of the IEP described above
- Team members decide if they are ready to sign the IEP document showing if they agree or disagree with the plan; families or other team members can take time following the meeting to make a decision
- Team members sign the document to show they agree or disagree



## WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH THE IEP OR AM NOT SATISFIED WITH THE SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES?

- Meet with the school staff to discuss the concerns and ideas and try to come to an agreement
- Request IEP facilitation from a neutral person to assist the team with discussions (not required under IDEA, but included as an option in Nebraska)
- Request mediation from a trained mediator who can help to find a mutually agreeable resolution; this is voluntary
- File a petition for a due process hearing in which a hearing officer listens to evidence and testimony and makes a decision
- Formal hearing in a court

## WHAT IF I WANT TO MEET WITH THE TEAM BEFORE THE YEARLY IEP MEETING?

- Families can request an IEP meeting at any time to share new information, discuss concerns, review progress, etc.





# TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH TEACHERS AND SCHOOL PROFESSIONALS

## WHY DOES EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION MATTER?

**Build a Strong Team:** It fosters a sense of partnership between parents and teachers, creating a supportive network that enhances a child's overall educational experience and success.

**Support Student Progress and Learning:** Effective communication between families and teachers or other school professionals ensures that everyone is informed about a student's needs and progress. Everyone on the team helps support the student and let each other know if more or different supports might be needed. It helps families to understand the curriculum and teaching methods, empowering them to better support their child's learning at home.

**Gain Behavioral Insights:** It helps gain insights into the student's behavior at home and school. Everyone on the team can work together to teach important skills and share what they find works to address any behavioral concerns.

## EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION GOES TWO-WAYS



- This means that each person knows how to contact the other.
- When one person contacts the other, there is a way for the person to respond, share information or feedback, or ask questions.
- Communication happens on a regular basis, not just when problems come up.

### TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION



- Connect with the teacher at the start of the year to share about your child and find ways to communicate
- Reach out to share good news and compliments
- Actively listen to what the teacher has to share
- Reach out early if problems come up - focus on your child's needs and solving the problem as a team

### FIND WAYS TO COMMUNICATE THAT ARE TWO-WAY

These might include:

- Phone Calls
- In-Person Check-ins
- Emails
- Texts
- Journals
- Apps





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