

## Manchester-Essex Regional School District

### **Preparing for IEP Meetings: Tips for Parents**

#### **Know what to expect....**

- Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings in MERSD follow guidelines and utilize forms required by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Meetings are facilitated by a chairperson who follows an established agenda to ensure that all components of IEP development are addressed.

A typical meeting agenda is as follows:

- Review of parent and student concerns
- Discussion of student progress towards IEP goals
- Review and updating of IEP components (accommodations, goals, services)
- Discussion of extended year service needs, MCAS, Transition Plan, etc.
- Discussion of student vision

#### **Prepare for your contributions to the meeting....**

##### ***Annual IEP Meetings:***

- Talk to your child about his or her IEP before the meeting. Your questions may include the following:
  - *For younger children:* What is going well at school? What is most challenging?
  - *For older children/adolescents:* Are there specific concerns about school and learning? Have IEP goals been met? Are some accommodations (e.g. extended time, repetition of directions) or services no longer necessary? Are others needed?
- If your child will turn 14 or older during the upcoming IEP period, he/she will be invited to the Team meeting. Ask your child about his/her interest in attending part or all of the meeting and contributing to the development of goals for the upcoming year.
- Review your child's progress reports during the IEP period. Are you concerned or disappointed with your child's progress in any areas? These concerns can help the Team to develop programming for your child.
- Review current reports, last year's IEP (if applicable), and the Notice of Procedural Safeguards sent to you annually.

- Collaboration with parents is maximized when parents have thought about their IEP related concerns and priorities for the upcoming school year. It may be helpful to note your concerns in advance to share with the Team.
- Build a positive relationship with at least one person on the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, such as classroom teacher, liaison, or school psychologist, before the meeting. You are welcome to connect with these staff members by phone or e-mail. The Director of Student Services also maintains monthly office hours for parent support and advice.

### ***Three Year Re-Evaluations:***

- Copies of your child's evaluation reports are available for you to pick up two days before the Team meeting. You are encouraged to read the reports prior to the meeting and to highlight sections that require more clarification. Share your questions with the Team during the meeting.
- You are encouraged to arrange a time to speak with the school psychologist or other evaluators individually after the meeting if you would like to have a more in-depth conversation about your child's report.
- Send any copies of privately contracted assessment reports to the Chairperson 6-10 days before the meeting so they can be familiar with the data before the meeting. If you bring a report that you have not provided in advance, the Chairperson will need to schedule another Team meeting within 10 school days to review and discuss the evaluator's findings and recommendations.

### **During the Meeting...**

- Share your insight regarding your child's interests, strengths, challenges, and study habits.
- Be aware of meeting time constraints. Most IEP meetings are held for one hour. Initial and three year evaluation meetings may be slightly longer.
- Keep in mind that the purpose of an IEP meeting differs from a parent-teacher conference. Teachers are asked to discuss progress as it relates to the students' current performance levels in areas addressed by the IEP. If you need to have a more in-depth discussion about specific assignments or grades, a separate meeting with your child's teacher(s) should be scheduled.
- If you feel that a follow-up meeting is needed to further explore concerns or assess how strategies are working, do not hesitate to ask the meeting Chairperson.