

Communication Options for Families

Options Available if You Have Questions or Disagree with a Decision of the School

Families and schools have a “built-in” partnership with the child as the focus. This partnership will grow when parents and school staff work together. Disagreements may happen, but working together improves your child’s education.

What can you do if questions or concerns arise?

- ◇ If concerns arise, families are encouraged to first talk directly with the people involved as soon as possible (see local contacts – ex: your child’s teachers, principal, other school administrators)
- ◇ First, call to schedule an informal meeting to discuss the situation
- ◇ Then, prepare for the meeting by making a list of concerns and some possible solutions

What can you do in the meeting?

- ◇ Identify student strengths and acknowledge what is working
- ◇ Identify concerns of families and educators
- ◇ Use active listening in order to understand the other person’s perspective
- ◇ Ask questions or restate ideas so the team has a clear understanding
- ◇ Work together to suggest some possible options to resolve the concerns
- ◇ Analyze all of the options to see if you can find areas of agreement
- ◇ Discuss what should happen next

What if concerns are not fully resolved in the meeting?

- ◇ Request a break or ask the IEP team to meet again and consider including additional team members.
- ◇ Call others for suggestions on possible future action (see Communication Options for Families chart).

Problem solving at the school level gives families and school districts more collaborative options on outcomes for children.

Next Steps: What can be done if these attempts at solving problems don’t work?

- ◇ **Facilitated IEP:** An option for early conflict resolution Wisconsin has chosen to make available to families and schools. A neutral, trained professional helps the IEP team with the IEP process. <http://www.wsems.us/iep-facilitation>
- ◇ **Mediation:** An option for early conflict resolution available at no cost to families and schools. A mediator helps families and schools work toward resolution on special education conflicts/issues. <http://www.wsems.us/mediation>
- ◇ **IDEA State Complaints:** Anyone who believes a school district violated state or federal special education law has the right to file a complaint with DPI. More information at: <http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/dispute-resolution/complain>
- ◇ **Due Process Hearings:** Parents, adult students, and schools districts have the right to request due process hearings for special education disputes. More information at: <http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/dispute-resolution/due-process>

Access to WSPEI Family Engagement Coordinators and the WI Mediation System are provided at no cost to parents.

CESA – Cooperative Educational Service Agency
DPI – Department of Public Instruction

IEP – Individualized Education Program
WSPEI – Wisconsin Statewide Parent Educator Initiative

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WSPEI information can be found at: www.wspei.org

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School District:

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Student Name

Who Can I Talk To?

