Making the Most of Mandatory Meetings

Carol Alderson, CCC-SLP  carolannalderson@gmail.com
“If I didn’t spend so much time getting ready for and attending meetings…”

- **ASHA 2014 SLP School Survey, Survey Summary Report**: In a typical week, full time, elementary level SLPs spend 9.3 hours doing evaluations, record keeping and paperwork, 4.1 hours on IEP meetings and consultation and 23 hours providing direct service to students.
Meeting Goals

- Parents and teachers understand the student’s current levels of functioning and participate in programming decisions.

- Parents are satisfied that the team knows their child and is dedicated to the child’s progress.
Meeting Goals continued….

- The IEP sets the course for reasonable student growth, setting up services that meet student needs
- The IEP is completed and meets compliance requirements
What does it mean for a meeting to go well?
Everything you do matters!

Developing and maintaining relationships with teachers, teammates, administrators and parents

Communicating with teachers, teammates, administrators and parents

Planning ahead, being prepared, and following up

Knowing special education rules and regulations
Relationships with Teachers

• Approach interactions professionally
• Understand their daily challenge
• Share the load but set boundaries
• Be prepared and follow through
• Prioritize relationships
Relationships with Teammates

- Collaborate on problem solving
- Offer to pitch in and ask for help
- Meet timelines
- Be prepared
- Be willing to flex
Relationships with Parents

- Be proactive, anticipate questions and concerns
- Align in some way
- Always speak and dress professionally
- Follow through on commitments
Relationships with Administrators

- Be proactive in providing information
- Explain processes and procedures
- Seek advice and assistance
Communication with Teachers

- Beware of email
- Check on progress and problem solve periodically
- Collaborate to meet the child’s needs
- Be clear, diplomatic, concise and compassionate
Communication with Teammates

• Timely, honest, clear and specific
• Blind copy on email-issues
• Respect schedules and work time
Communication with Parents

- Gage the need, type and frequency
- Be specific about what they can expect
- Be compassionate, yet direct and honest
- Strategize with teammates
Planning ahead, being prepared and following up

“The best preparation for good work tomorrow is to do good work today.”
Elbert Hubbard

“Trust is earned by following through and being dependable in small things as well as in large things.”
Unknown
District guidelines, special ed. rules and regulations

- Process and procedures
- Compliance deadlines
- Eligibility criteria
- IEP components, compliance
Preparing teachers

Share information, answer questions
Collaborate on drafting new goals
Explain meeting sequence and agenda
Discuss meeting roles, eligibility
Preparing parents via phone calls

Current levels
Forewarn for eligibility
Take time to understand concerns
Check comfort level, answer questions
Gain trust
Strategize

Pre made agendas for type of meeting

Current Levels chart

Accommodations and Plan chart

One speaker for background info

Determine roles in advance
Special Considerations

Cultural and linguistic differences

Advocates

Center based programs

Additional family members
The time is confirmed and the agenda is set...

Who will lead the meeting?
One who contributes structure and process to interactions so groups are able to function effectively and make high-quality decisions.

*Advanced Facilitation Strategies: Tools & techniques to master difficult situations.*

Bens, I. (2005)
Context and information rule

Team decision based on meeting purpose, lead service provider, prior information, beliefs, skills and style, relationships and strategy.
Skills that help...

Choose someone who is skilled in:

Providing the appropriate amount of structure to a meeting so that the objectives of the meeting are accomplished in the meeting time frame.

Helping participants find answers to their questions, solutions to problems, and make necessary decisions.
Styles and behavior that help...

Compassionate toward parents
Respectful, honest
Assertive, confident
Organized, structured, sequential
Observant of nonverbal communication
Diplomatic communicator
Beliefs that help...

Parents send us the best kids they have.

All children want to learn.

The grief cycle influences behavior.

Personal history and experiences impact interactions and level of trust.
Structure and process basics...

- Introductions
- Time frames
- Purpose
- IEP Agenda
- Keeping time
- Meeting flow
Anticipating, Adjusting for Teachers...

Redirecting teachers that keep talking

Helping them share difficult information

Making sure the information is accurate
Anticipating, Adjusting for Teachers...

Navigating around conflicting or last minute information

Problem solving a lack of data to support eligibility decisions

Options when the teacher disagrees with the team
Anticipating, Adjusting for Parents...

Acknowledging limited or slow progress

Helping when information is misinterpreted

Reassuring worried parents
Anticipating, Adjusting for Parents...

Moving forward when there is frustration and anger

Understanding where blame comes from

Supporting teachers under fire
Anticipating, Adjusting for Parents...

Making test scores meaningful

Redirecting parents who jump ahead or get stuck in any IEP stage

Dancing around increased service time

Engaging in constructive problem solving
Anticipating, Adjusting for Administrators...

Keeping the pace when administrators are late to the meeting

Handling the escalation when the administrator doesn’t

Correcting the information, not the administrator
Anticipating, Adjusting for Administrators...

Reinforcing the importance of RTI data in eligibility decisions

Cueing the administrator for next steps when students don’t qualify
When meetings go well, there’s more time and better outcomes for students!