



PARENT EXPRESS

“What Did They Say?”

Tips for Parents Attending School Meetings

Mollie Toppe, WVU Extension Agent, Wetzel County

If your child is struggling in any area of school, you may be invited to a school meeting. These meetings are to problem solve with a team of people dedicated to your child’s success at school. Any conference or meeting at school can be intimidating. If you are prepared and have an idea of what to expect, it will make you more comfortable.

What Is It?

Meetings at schools can have several different names. You may see a meeting notice for “S.A.T.” (Student Assistance Team), “I.E.P.” (Individualized Education Program) or “I.F.S.P.” (Individualized Family Service Plan). No matter the name of the meeting, the goals will be similar – identifying the best way to help your child in school.

Who Is At the Table?

Some meetings may be small and consist of only your child’s teacher. However, most school meetings will involve more staff. Be prepared that there may be quite a few people at the table.

Some of the people in the meeting may be:

- **Classroom teacher:** The teacher that is primarily responsible for your child’s grade level.
- **Principal:** Administrator of the school.
- **Reading specialist:** Person trained to identify challenges with reading development and teach needed literacy skills.
- **School psychologist:** Person trained to apply expertise in mental health, learning and

behavior to help youths succeed academically, socially, behaviorally and emotionally.

- **Special education teacher:** Person trained to provide instruction to meet the special learning needs of an exceptional child, trained to teach in certain areas, such as specific learning disabilities, hard of hearing and intellectual disabilities.
- **Speech/language pathologist (speech therapist):** Person trained to diagnose speech and language problems, and provide help for children in improving speech and language skills.
- **Occupational therapist:** Person trained to build the skills needed in daily living, such as feeding, dressing, playing and fine and gross motor skills.
- **Audiologist:** Person trained to diagnose hearing impairments and provide help for children with hearing impairments, including determining the need for selecting and fitting a hearing aid.

Remember, that all the people at the table are there to help and support your child. However, they may have different opinions about the best way to do that. There may also be a S.A.T. coordinator, who is in charge of the meeting paperwork and helping guide the discussion and planning. You are also welcome to bring someone with you. It may help to have another person to either take notes or who can discuss the meeting with you afterwards. This could be a friend or someone who also knows your child.

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What Did They Say?

Educators can use words that are unfamiliar to you. They may also use acronyms – or a series of letters that stand for words. You may want to review this list before you attend a meeting. However, you should always feel free to speak up and ask them to explain. Try not to be embarrassed if you don't understand; sometimes, they may just forget that not everyone is used to using the buzz words.

- **Consent** – Parent or guardian is fully informed, understands and gives permission for an activity to take place (i.e., for a student to receive special services).
- **Core instruction** – Teaching that is done in a classroom with all students by a teacher or support staff.
- **E.S.Y.** – Extended School Year is an education program that occurs, in addition to the regular 180-day school year, to build skills and prevent summer regression (i.e., summer school).
- **I.E.P.** – An Individualized Education Program is a written plan developed by educators, parents and related service personnel, which serves as the main document for the exceptional child's education.
- **Intensive instruction** – Similar to targeted instruction but with an increase in time and generally done in smaller groups.
- **Multidisciplinary evaluation** – A series of procedures and tests to determine the child's abilities – usually done by several different teachers or a school psychologist.
- **Observation** – A look at the child in school or home to note how the child works or plays in different situations or different times. An observation is done to learn more about the child.

- **Placement** – The setting in which a child receives special education and/or additional services.
- **Progress monitoring** – Testing that occurs for students in targeted or intensive instruction to track their progress based on the taught skills.
- **S.P.L.** – Support for Personalized Learning is a way to teach students at different levels of math and reading skills.
- **Targeted instruction** – Teaching by a teacher, specialist or special educator with increased intensity based on an individual student's needs.
- **Universal screening** – All students are tested to determine skill level in reading and math (and sometimes behavior).

Parents and guardians are the most important members of any school team. You know your child better than anyone else at the table and can share valuable information. Speak up to share your thoughts and concerns and ask questions when needed. Being a prepared, informed and active participant in the meeting will greatly help your child's education.

Sources

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