

IEP Module Assessment

Amy is a first grade student. She is observed to be very social and is a good reader. Her parents actively support her learning outside of the classroom by taking her to the library every week, reading to her every night, and setting up frequent play dates with children in the neighborhood.

Amy began receiving early intervention services when she was diagnosed in her first year with cerebral palsy, resulting from birth complications. She received physical therapy and occupational therapy as part of her early intervention and later community-based preschool experiences. Amy has state-of-the-art adaptive equipment to promote independent mobility and use of her hands. Amy's parents appreciated the family support received in her early intervention program, which also continued to a lesser extent in the preschool special education program. They were accustomed to a family-centered approach in which services were designed largely around their own family resources and priorities.

The transition to first grade brought a new approach to individualized planning. Amy's mother Jill confided to Ronda, Amy's new teacher, that she felt uncomfortable at her first IEP conference in the new school because she felt too separated from the process. Jill appreciated the work that school personnel had put into preparing for the conference but was surprised that the IEP seemed to have been fully developed before the conference. She was not asked to give her own suggestions on goals for Amy as she had been in the past, and worried that the school's pre-determined goals did not take all of Amy's current skills into account. Most of the conference was spent by Ronda, the OT, and the PT reading their reports, which seemed to emphasize Amy's limitations with writing and getting around the classroom and playground. It seemed that these limitations were all about Amy and less about how aspects of the school environment might contribute to her learning or to the challenges the professionals described. Although Jill had brought some notes herself, there did not seem to be a good time to share them. Before she knew it, the conference was over and she left with the unsettled feeling that she had somehow betrayed Amy by not celebrating her accomplishments or advocating for goals that would challenge both her cognitive as well as her physical development. Jill also felt that even though she knew Amy much more intimately than anyone else at the conference, her wealth of knowledge was wasted in this planning process.

Questions

1. What concerns arise from this description of Amy's IEP conference? Refer to Anna's comments about the IEP, strengths and needs, the home-school connection, and setting goals. Also consider the 10 steps for an effective IEP meeting.
2. Now that Ronda is aware of Jill's feelings about the IEP conference, how do you suggest that the team reorganize for a better outcome in the future? Who should be involved in these changes?
3. What are three suggestions for Jill to consider in future IEP meetings?

