

ASK

All Special Kids

Contents

Assessment and IEP

A Word from the Editors	1
The role of Assessment	2
Preparing for Assessment	3
Individual Education Programme (IEP)	4
Who should attend the IEP Meeting?	5
What happens at IEP Meeting?	6
What's in an IEP?	7
Goals and Objectives	8
Measuring Progress	9
Job Opportunity	9
Volunteers Needed	9
Brain Science	9
Before the IEP Meeting	10
During the IEP Meeting	11
Geneva View Point	12
ASK's Summer Camp	13
ASK Calendar May 2007	14
Farewell to Friends	14

ASK - All Special Kids
Parc des Mayens 46
1218 Le Grand-Saconnex
Switzerland
Telephone: +4122 7336241
Mobile: +4179 5667078
Website: allspecialkids.org
Email: info@allspecialkids.org

All.Special.Kids

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

ISSUE NO.5 MAY/JUNE 2007

Dear Friends

Allegra was less than 2 months old, when her pediatrician informed me that she showed signs of developmental delays. As a first time mother who had religiously read the book, "What to expect when you're expecting", the news still came to me as a total shock. Allegra started her physio-therapy at 3 months old, occupational therapy around 6 months and speech therapy when she was almost a year old. Today, looking at hindsight, I am truly grateful for this "early" assessment, which allowed my child a head start to improve her developmental stages.

More than a decade later and after reading many IEPs (Individualized Educational Programme), I am now more informed of the assessment process and how important it is to get assess at an early stage. I am also keenly aware, the devastation news of this nature can cause to unaware and uninformed parents, if it is not delivered gently and sensitively.

Assessment is the most important, first step in determining the exact difficulties your child is having; why Johnny is still not talking at home and why Ally is not reading at school. Based on the assessment results, the specialist, school and parents can then work together to determine what accommodation or support services are needed to help the child be successful both at school and home.



This month, we focus on Assessment and the IEP, Individualized Education Programme. We discuss how to prepare yourself and your child for assessment, what to expect from the process and how the result is translated by the Educational Psychologist. We also discuss what an IEP is, how it is developed and how to prepare yourself for the IEP meeting with the school.

To further deepen the understanding of assessment and the IEP process, we are inviting Dr. Gavin Reid again to Geneva for a presentation to hear the importance of early identification, learn what teachers and parents should look out for and discuss how the test results can be implemented to assist your child at home and school.

ASK wishes to thank Jenny Jeffreys for her research work on this issue.

Happy Reading!

Joy and ASK Newsletter Team
E-mail: newsletter@allspecialkids.org

WHO WE ARE

ASK - All Special Kids, previously known as Anglophone Special Kids, is a Geneva-based network, aiming to support the families of children with special needs and learning difficulties. Our goal is to collect, disseminate information and share experiences relating to special needs issues in the region. Although the group focuses on assisting English-speaking parents, we welcome parents of different nationalities, seeking assistance or information on special needs and learning difficulties issues.

Our motto: ASK - We are here to help...



“The assessment is not an admission of the child’s failure. It is a positive act, aimed at ensuring that all their hard work and attempts to do well can be turned into better result”



The role of Assessment

Psychological and educational assessments play a vital role in diagnosing learning and behavioural problems, developing action plans to address those problems, and monitoring progress. A thorough assessment will involve parents, teachers and health professionals, and will typically include a full review of the child’s background, formal testing using standardised tests, and observation.

Assessments of this type are perhaps more common in the USA and UK, where there are statutory provisions to ensure that children with special needs have access to appropriate education. In the USA, this comes under the heading of “IEP” (Individualized Educational Program), whereas in the UK the process is known as “Statementing” (the development of a statement of Special Educational Needs).

In the case of many ASK members, it may not be easy to get access to appropriate local assessment services. The ASK website and advice service are invaluable sources, but many families still end up having to look to their home countries for assessment. This can add further complications to an already stressful situation.

Preparing Your Child for Assessment

Preparing your child can reduce anxiety and encourage cooperation. The assessment is not an admission of the child’s failure. It is a positive act, aimed at ensuring that all their hard work and attempts to do well can be turned into better results. Explain what the assessment will involve. Get the teacher involved in this too. And make sure that the identification of the child’s strengths is emphasised. Try to schedule any assessment during the time of day when your usually child functions best. If things get tough, acknowledge that your

child is doing their best and that you are proud of them. Look always to encourage.

Assessment Caveats

No single definitive test exists to diagnose a learning disability with 100% accuracy. A diagnosis results from the convergence of many tests. Often, observations of a child’s behaviour and social skills assist the identification process. Some children, however, have multiple problems which confound the diagnostic process.

Sources of Information

There has been a huge amount written on the topic of assessment. Recommended sources for this note include:

- “Learning Disabilities from a Parent’s Perspective”, by Kim Glenchur
- The different perspectives of health professionals, parents and teachers are voiced at <http://www.ican.org.uk/TalkingPoint/Themes/Assessment%20at%20Primary%20School.aspx>
- <http://www.schwablearning.org/articles.aspx?r=863>

NEXT ISSUE on Social Skills

Dear Readers,

Our next newsletter will focus on “Social Skills” issues such as;

- * Bullying & teasing
- * Empathy and assertiveness
- * Listening and taking turns
- * Reading non-verbal cues
- * conversational skills
- * Self awareness and self confidence
- * self control
- * conflict resolution

We would like to invite you to share your personal stories or anecdotes, happy and/or sad, to add elements of life in Geneva, living in a different culture as a family of children with special needs. Please send your article contribution to newsleter@allspecialkids.org no later than 1st June.

Preparing for Assessment

So you've taken the step to arrange an assessment for your child - here are some pointers, which might help you get the most out of what can sometimes be quite an intimidating process.

Pre-assessment

Before an assessment takes place parents need to ensure that the school is informed of the following:

- early pre-school development,
- the age at which key milestones were reached since birth e.g. when started talking and walking,
- any reasons why the parents feel that their child may have a learning difficulty such as dyslexia,
- any other reason for possible difficulty in learning, such as problems at birth,
- home factors such as behaviour, interest in learning and the things which are motivating.

The assessment

A formal assessment can be a daunting process for both the child and the parents. It is important that the potential for this is minimised. The child should be prepared for the assessment. The actual word 'assessment' however need not be used as this in itself may induce stress. There are a number of ways of indicating to the child what will happen without using the word 'assessment'. This will minimise any anxiety. Essentially the tester is engaging in a range of activities with the child to find out how he/she learns and what can be done to help to improve learning. This views assessment as a positive activity, which of course it should be.

The parent(s) should try to be available immediately after the assessment to get some initial feedback and to re-assure their child on his/her performance. Parents also need, if possible, to speak with the tester before the assessment in order to find out how long the procedure will take and what kind of information he/she is looking for in the assessment.

The person conducting the assessment will need some background information from the parents particularly relating to any concerns they may have about the development and the behaviours/ characteristics of their child. It is helpful to provide some details on how the child behaves at home in terms of his/her social skills, learning pattern and motivation. Much of this information of course varies with the age of the child, or young adult, who is to be tested.

Feedback from the assessment

Feedback following the assessment is extremely important and should ideally involve the class teacher, member of school management team and the parents, and if appropriate, the child. The parents however usually want some immediate informal feedback from the assessor. The feedback to parents should include the following:

- Details of the tests administered and the reasons why particular tests were used.
- The child's test behaviour, motivation, was he/she interested in the test materials, did the child manage to maintain interest throughout the assessment.
- The results - how do they compare to the norm (average), if possible you can ask to see a graph, or some other visually displayed profile
- The implications of the results – this is important as the results should provide information on a diagnosis, and importantly recommendations for intervention, or further assessment.
- Follow-up assessment and details of any monitoring of progress that will be carried out.

This is important and arrangements and time sequence for monitoring of progress should be indicated. It is important as a parent you are re-assured that the assessment is not the end of the process, but in many cases the beginning. Details of short, medium and long term monitoring should be indicated although this can best be negotiated with the school.

(adapted from an article by Dr. Gavin Reid, "Parents and Dyslexia" Issues, Concerns and Successes)



"It is important as a parent you are re-assured that the assessment is not the end of the process, but in many cases the beginning"





“In the Geneva area, many private schools adopt their own procedures, which simply draw on the most essential elements of these requirements”



Individual Education Programmes

Any child who receives special education and related services should have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP creates an opportunity for teachers, parents, school administrators, related services personnel, and students (when appropriate) to work together to improve educational results for children with disabilities.

This section includes three articles covering the creation of IEPs, the IEP process, and the importance of good communication.

There are many legal requirements for IEPs mentioned in the original article, which are beyond the scope of this newsletter. More detailed information can be found on web sites relevant to your country of residence. In the Geneva area, many private schools adopt their own procedures, which simply draw on the most essential elements of these requirements.

Developing an IEP for your child

If you have a child with special needs, your child's education is most likely an area of great interest to you. As a child with a disability, he or she may be eligible for special education services in school. If so, then it will be important for you to learn:

- more about special education,
- what special education can do for your child, and
- what part you can play in the special education process.

One of the most important parts of the special education process is creating a plan for your child's education. This plan is called the Individualized Education Program, or the IEP. The IEP is the foundation for your child's education, and you are a very important member of the team that develops it. Your child's IEP lists the specific special education services your child will receive, based upon his or her individual needs.

The IEP Process

The IEP meeting serves as a communication vehicle between parents and school personnel, and enables them, as equal participants, to make joint, informed decisions regarding -

- * the child's needs and appropriate goals;
- * the extent to which the child will be involved in the general curriculum and participate in the regular education environment and various assessments;
- * the services needed to support that involvement and participation, and to achieve agreed-upon goals.

Parents are considered *equal partners with school personnel* in making these decisions, and the IEP team must consider the parents' concerns and the information that they provide regarding their child.

What's involved in developing my child's IEP?

The process of developing your child's IEP involves two main things:

- * the IEP meeting(s), where you, your child (at times), and school staff members together decide on an educational program for your son or daughter; and
- * the IEP document, which puts the decisions from that meeting in writing. Among other things, this document lists the services and supports your child will receive.

The whole IEP process is a way for you and the school to talk about your child's needs and to create a plan to meet those needs.

Where and when do IEP meetings take place?

- * You and the school agree on where and when to have the IEP meeting. Usually, meetings are held at school during regular staff time.

(Continued on the following page)

The first step in the acquisition of wisdom is silence, the second listening, the third memory, the fourth practice, the fifth teaching others. *Solomon Ibn Gabriel*

Who should attend the IEP meeting?

(Continued from the following page 4)

The school should tell you in writing:

- * what the purpose of the meeting is,
- * the time and place for the meeting,
- * who will be there, and
- * that you may invite other people who have knowledge or special expertise about your child to the meeting.

It may take more than one meeting to write a complete IEP. If you find more time is needed, ask the team to schedule another meeting.

You may ask for an IEP meeting at any time, if you feel that changes need to be made to your child's educational program. Some teams like to meet near the end of a grading period to talk about the student's progress and to make changes to the IEP, as needed.

Who should attend the IEP meeting?

A typical IEP meeting will comprise the following people:

- * You, as Parent(s)
- * School Administrator—a member of the school district who knows about the general curriculum (the same curriculum taught to non-disabled children) and the resources available to the school. This person should also be qualified to provide special education services or supervise services.
- * General Education Teacher—at least one general education teacher, if your child is (or may be) participating in the general education class.
- * Special Education Teacher—at least one of your child's special education teachers or, if appropriate, at least one special education provider who works with your child.
- * Evaluation Personnel—someone who knows- (a) about your child's evaluation, (b) what the evaluation results were, © what the results mean in terms of instruction.

This could be a school psychologist, an administrator, or one of your child's teachers.

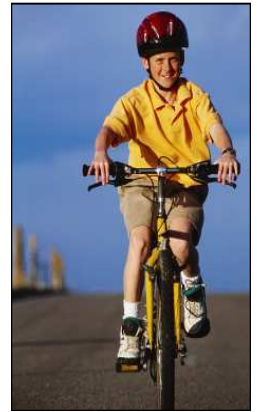
- * Your Child—If the IEP team will be talking about how to prepare your child for life after high school, your child must be invited to the meeting. Otherwise, deciding when and how your child will participate in the IEP meeting is a decision you and your child can make. Students are encouraged to take part in developing their own IEPs. Some students in elementary school come to the meeting just to learn a little about the process or to share information about themselves. As students get older, they take a more active role.

Other members of the team

Besides the people listed above, you and the school can invite other people to the IEP meeting. These can include:

- * Therapists or other professionals who work with your child.
- * Translators or interpreters—If English is not your first language, or if you communicate by using sign language, the school should provide an interpreter, if you ask for one.
- * Transition personnel—If the IEP meeting will include planning for your child's life after high school, staff from outside agencies may be invited to attend. This is especially true if an outside agency may be responsible for providing or paying for transition services.
- * Others with knowledge or special expertise about your child — Many parents find it helpful to have a support person at the IEP meeting. This may be another parent, a friend, an advocate, or a consultant. Others could include private specialists, tutors, educational consultants, or other school staff. Both you and the school have the right to invite such individuals to join the team.

(Continued on the following page)



“The IEP meeting serves as a communication vehicle between parents and school personnel, and enables them, as equal participants, to make joint, informed decisions”



Life is like a game of cards. The hand that is dealt you represents determinism; the way you play it is free will.

Jawaharal Nehru



●
●
●

“You know your child’s strengths and weaknesses and all the little differences that make your child unique. Your knowledge can steer the team toward creating an IEP that will work best for your child ”



What happens at the IEP meeting?

(Continued from page 5)

What do different team members bring to the IEP process?

As you can see, there can be many people on an IEP team. While everyone shares in the discussion, you will find that each brings his or her own point of view and experience.

As a parent, you bring very important information to the IEP meeting. You know your child better than anyone. You know his or her strengths and weaknesses and all the little differences that make your child unique. Your knowledge can steer the team toward creating an IEP that will work best for your child. You can tell the team what goals are most important to you and to your child. You can give insights about your child's interests, likes and dislikes, and learning styles. By being an active IEP team member you can ensure that your child's IEP is developed with thought given to long-term needs for a successful adult life.

When your child participates in the IEP meeting, it can have a powerful effect. Just having your child at the meeting can make the IEP process come more alive. Requests and suggestions that come directly from your child can carry more weight than when you voice them. Many parents are sometimes surprised when they hear their children speak about their disability, their educational desires, and their goals for the future. And sometimes teachers learn things about their students that they didn't know before.

Your child's role as an IEP team member, depending on age and ability, can be as broad as your own or limited to what you and he or she feel most comfortable with. When your child is part of the IEP process, the program can be much more worthwhile to him or her, instead of something to put up with. Taking part in IEP meetings also helps your child learn to speak up for him or herself and develop valuable self-advocacy skills.

What happens at the IEP meeting?

At the IEP meeting the team will develop, review, and/or revise the IEP document. You and the other team members will work to create an IEP that is educationally appropriate and that everyone can agree on. Before meeting, school staff usually write down their ideas of what needs to be in your child's IEP. It's a good idea for you to jot down what is most important to you. You can share these ideas with other members of the team before the meeting, if you wish. You can also ask the school to send you their draft ideas, so you can look them over before meeting. Team members can also get copies of your child's recent tests or evaluations.

During the meeting, each person takes a turn in the discussion. Part of the discussion will include talking about:

- Your child's strengths,
- Your concerns,
- The results of the most recent evaluation of your child,
- The results of any assessments (tests) your child has taken, and
- Asking and answering the following questions that are sometimes referred to as "special factors" or "special considerations."

- * Does your child have communication needs?
- * Does your child need assistive technology services and devices?
- * Does your child's behaviour interfere with his or her learning or the learning of others?
- * Does your child have a visual impairment and need instruction in or use of Braille?
- * Is your child deaf or hard of hearing and have language and other communication needs?
- * Does your child have language needs related to his or her IEP, because English is not his or her first language?

If the answer to any of these questions is "yes," the team will discuss what your child needs and include this information in IEP.

What's in an IEP?

(Continued from page 6)

Usually, your child's primary teacher goes first. If your child is already receiving special education services, this will probably be the special education teacher. If the meeting is to write your child's first IEP, then this person may be the general education teacher. The teacher begins with how your child is doing in school. He or she will describe your child's strengths and needs and how the disability affects your child throughout the school day.

Then specialists, like a physical therapist or a speech therapist, will discuss how your child is doing in these areas. They will talk about your child's needs and how they plan to support your child's education. Goals and objectives, related services, and all of the required parts of the IEP will be talked about and decided on.

It's a good idea to share your ideas as the meeting goes along. Remember, as a parent, you are an equal member of the IEP team. You are an expert on your child. If you have questions or concerns, speak up. Ask for more information or an explanation if you need it. If you disagree with something you hear, respectfully say so. Explain why, or offer your point of view. The IEP meeting is a conversation and a dialogue. You and the other IEP team members are putting your heads together to design an effective program for your child. The main purpose of the meeting is to agree on each part of the IEP so that the document can be written and services can start.

Fast ForWord

Program is coming to Geneva in 2008
Wiring the Brain for Academic Gain
 The *Fast ForWord* family of products by Scientific Learning, can be a life-changing intervention for reluctant or struggling readers. Visit <http://www.scilearn.com/> for more information and contact info@allspecialkids.org if you wish to receive more information on the program.

What's in an IEP?

In each school district the IEP form can look different. Typically the IEP should include:

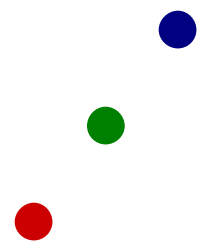
- * Your child's present levels of educational performance;
- * Annual goals and short-term objectives; How your child's progress will be measured;
- * The specific special education, related services, and supplementary aids and services to be provided to or on behalf of your child, including program modifications or supports for school staff;
- * An explanation of the extent (if any) to which your child will not participate with non-disabled children;
- * Any modifications your child will need when taking assessments;
- * The dates when services will begin and end, the amount of services, as well as how often and where they will take place; How you will be informed of your child's progress;

Each one of the items above should be discussed in detail during the IEP meeting and be filled in on the IEP form. Here we look in more detail at the first three of these:

Present Levels of Educational Performance

This section of the IEP describes how your child is doing in school, based on current information. It should cover all areas of development where your child may need support. Some examples are:

- * Academic skills—math, reading, writing
- * Daily living or self-help skills—dressing, eating, using the bathroom
- * Social skills—making friends
- * Behaviour
- * Sensory skills—hearing, seeing
- * Communication skills—talking
- * Mobility—getting around in school and the community
- * Vocational skills—working



“If the IEP team will be talking about how to prepare your child for life after high school, your child must be invited to the meeting”





“When your child participates in the IEP meeting, it can have a powerful effect. Just having your child at the meeting can make the IEP process come more alive”



Annual Goals and Short-Term Objectives

(Continued from page 7)

A well-written “present level” will describe:

- * your child's strengths and weaknesses, what helps your child learn,
- * what limits or interferes with your child's learning,
- * objective data from current evaluations of your child, and
- * how your child's disability affects his or her ability to be involved and progress in the general curriculum.

Often, present level statements include teacher observations as well as information from evaluations. This information can give a more complete picture of what helps your child learn and what limits your child's learning. For example:

- * He needs a quiet, separate place to do individual work.
- * She learns quickly when working in a small group.
- * He understands and remembers what he hears about a subject. Learning by reading or looking at pictures is difficult and doesn't work as well for him.
- * She imitates other children and learns from them.

In short, the present levels of educational performance statement tells how your child is doing in school and names those areas where he or she is having difficulty. A clearly written and thorough present level is really important, because it is the foundation for all of the IEP. Goals and objectives are written based upon your child's present level. Special education and related services are provided based upon it and the goals and objectives that result from that present level. So take your time in writing the present level; be thorough. The information you include there will be the stepping stone to writing the rest of the IEP.

Annual Goals and Short-term Objectives

Once your child's needs are identified, the IEP team works to develop appropriate goals and objectives to address those needs.

An annual goal describes what your child can be expected to do within a 12-month period. A short-term objective is a step that will help your child reach that goal. Put another way, an annual goal is similar to your destination on a trip, and the short-term objective is the road you will take to get there.

Writing goals and objectives can be one of the hardest parts of the IEP. One reason for this is because goals and objectives can cover so many different areas. Depending upon your child's needs, some goals and objectives may target areas of the general curriculum. Other goals and objectives may target learning that comes from a special education or individualized curriculum. Examples of these could include teaching your child how to eat independently, to use public transportation, or to read Braille.

A well-written goal should be (a) positive, and (b) describe a skill that can be seen and measured. It answers the questions:

Who? . . . will achieve?

What? . . . skill or behaviour?

How? . . . in what manner or at what level?

Where? . . . in what setting or under what conditions?

When? . . . by what time? an ending date?

Measuring Your Child's Progress

Effective goals and objectives are critical parts of your child's IEP. Keeping track of your child's progress is just as important.

The IEP team must decide:

- * how your child's progress will be measured,
- * when your child's progress will be measured,
- * how well your child needs to perform in order to achieve the objective, and
- * how you will be regularly informed of your child's progress.

Measuring your Child's Progress

(Continued from page 8)

Often, information on how well your child must perform and how his or her progress will be measured is included within the short-term objective statements. For example, an objective may specify "with 90% accuracy on each of 5 trials". This type of information is called evaluation criteria. It tells how the student will be evaluated.

Another way the IEP team could further define progress measurement is by setting target dates within individual objectives.

For example:

Given a list of 20 unfamiliar words that contain short-vowel sounds, the child should decode them with

- * 60% accuracy by December 1,
- * 75% accuracy by March 1, and
- * 90% accuracy by June 15.

Teacher observation/notes are another way of checking progress. Other ways may include:

- * reviewing class work and homework assignments;
- * giving quizzes, tests, or teacher-made assessments; and
- * giving informal and/or formal assessments (the QRI or Woodcock-Johnson, for example).

(The materials from page 4 to 9 has been adapted from one article by Theresa Reborn (2002), published on the web site "LD Online", one of the leading sites dedicated to learning difficulties and ADHD (www-ldonline-org.))

"How Neuroscience can Improve Reading Skills"

Mike Merzenich on **Brain Plasticity**, a talk given at the Palo Alto Research Centre, covers brain plasticity, child development, language and reading skills, training and adult plasticity and the processes of how the brain controls its functionality.

http://www.parc.com/cms/get_article.php?id=568

Building the Brain's Learning Capacity

Video (5 minutes) on how the brain reads.

<http://scilearn.zftp.com/overview/index.html>

Source: <http://www.neuron-learning.co.uk/>

JOB OPPORTUNITY

Marketing and Fund Raising Coordinator

ASK is looking for someone highly creative and motivated with a passion to make a difference, who possess strong verbal and written communication skills, who has tenacity and excellent time management skills to work approximately 5 to 8 hours a week as a marketing specialist and to lead fund raising initiatives.

Job Description:

- * To lead the initiative in the development and execution of lead strategies, market research, donor identification.
- * Effectively build and assist in maintaining relationship with corporate sponsors.
- * Plan and co-ordinate special events and fundraising programs
- * Compensation is performance based.

Contact: joy@allspecialkids.org

LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS

ASK Summer Camp

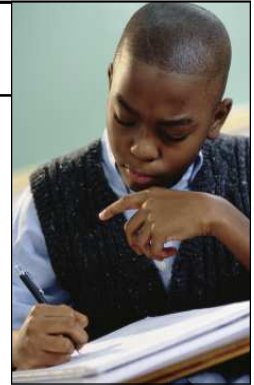
July-August 2007

ASK is seeking volunteers to help our instructors during camp activities. The ideal volunteer is energetic, patient, emphatic and highly motivated to work with children with special needs.

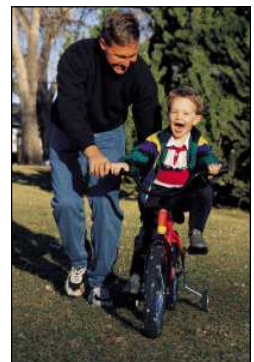
Young students or young at heart are most welcome. Minimum participation is one whole week but ideally two weeks. This could be a very rewarding and satisfying experience.

Camp Hours are from 8am to 4 pm.

Please contact joy@allspecialkids.org or elainec@allspecialkids.org for more information.



"It's a good idea to share your ideas as the meeting goes along. Remember, as a parent, you are an equal member of the IEP team. You are an expert on your child"





What do I do before the IEP Meeting?

You want to take part....

So, your first IEP meeting is coming up. How do you get ready? Here are some suggestions.

What do I do before the meeting?

- * **Review the information** on your child—from home, school, or private sources (such as doctors, therapists, or tutors). Ask yourself, "Do these records show the full picture?" Fill in any missing pieces, if you can. (If you feel current evaluations are not complete, you may want to ask that the IEP meeting be postponed until more information can be gathered on your child. Ask the school to evaluate your child and reconvene the meeting when the results are available. Bring your records to the meeting. You can also bring examples of your child's work (on paper, audiotape or videotape) to show specific concerns or insights you may have.
- * **Talk with your child** about the upcoming IEP and ask about school. "What things are hard? What things are easy? What do you want to work on this year?" Your child may have a lot to say about his or her needs and interests. Students are often much more aware of their strengths and weaknesses than parents realize. Make notes on what your child says.
- * **Think about your child's involvement** in general education classes. Consider his or her learning style, special education needs, and social needs. How can these needs be addressed in the IEP? What kinds of supports or services might your child need in order to be successful in the general education class? Ask your child what he or she wants or doesn't want in the way of support.
- * If your child will be attending all or part of the IEP meeting, **explain how the meeting works** in a way that he or she can understand.

- * Let your child know how important the meeting is and that **his or her opinions and input are valuable**. You may need to prepare your child to speak up at the meeting. Talk with your son or daughter about how to share his or her feelings about what is being proposed.
- * Do a **Positive Student Profile** to share with the team. To do this profile, you answer questions about your child (see below), which will help you organize your thoughts and focus clearly on your child's strengths, needs, and goals.
 1. Who is he/she?
 2. What are his/her strengths?
 3. What are his/her successes?
 4. What are his/her greatest challenges?
 5. What are his/her needs?
 6. What are our dreams for him/her?
 7. Other helpful information.

Brainstorm with people (teacher, friend, family members, tutor, therapist, consultant) to get some ideas before the meeting. Write down things you feel must be included in the IEP. Decide how you want to share this information with the other members of the IEP team.

- * Ask other team members if they can share their ideas about your child's program ahead of time.
- * Know your rights.
- * Are there any areas where you and the school might disagree? Plan how you want to handle these. List any information that might support your position. Think of alternatives to offer if the school is not willing to accept your first suggestion. Decide where you can compromise and where you can't.
- * Figure out who can go to the IEP meeting with you to help advocate for your child. Inviting someone to attend with you is a good idea, even if this person only takes notes. Another person may think of things during the meeting that you do not.

(The material from page 10 and 11 has been adapted from one article by Theresa Reborn (2002), published on the web site "LD Online", one of the leading sites dedicated to learning difficulties and ADHD (www-ldonline-org.))

●
●
●

"Students are often much more aware of their strengths and weaknesses than parents realize."



What do I do during the meeting?

Stay focused

Use your notes to keep yourself and the team on track. Keep the focus on your child's individual needs and in creating a plan that will lead to success. Remember your child's social and emotional needs, including the need to be with non-disabled peers.

Ask questions

If a team member says something you don't understand, ask the person to explain. If someone says something about your child that you don't agree with or have a question about, ask for backup information that supports the person's statement (teacher notes, checklists, evaluations). If you have different information, be sure to share it. Make sure you don't accept or reject a goal for your child based on incomplete information. If a present level statement is appropriate, there should be data to support it. If a goal is appropriate, there should be documentation to back up the need. You want to make sure that decisions are not made based upon a single event or random observations.

Be thorough

Make sure you agree with the language in the present levels of educational performance before you finalize goals and objectives. Try not to move away from one area until you are confident that it adequately addresses your child's needs. If you find that needed information is not available at the meeting, have the team make a note of what is missing, who will get the information, and when they will get it by. Then you can come back to discuss the issue when the needed information is received.

What can I do if we don't agree?

Avoid getting stuck debating a particular point over and over, especially if it feels like you are not getting anywhere. You need to be clear in your mind on where you can and cannot compromise. Communicate this in a reasonable and calm way. Sometimes, the following words can help the team resolve an issue.

"What will it take for us to reach an agreement on this issue?"

"Why don't we just try this for 6 weeks and see how it works?"

"I understand that you can't say yes to this request. Can you tell me who does have the authority? How do we get that person here?"

"We can all agree that this is not an easy issue. But we need to find a solution that will work for (your child) that we can all live with."

"I just don't see this as being appropriate for (your child). There have to be other options we haven't looked at."

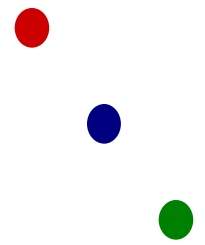
One of the most difficult things in an IEP meeting is keeping emotions under control. The key to reducing frustration and avoiding conflict is to be respectful of each other, even when you don't agree. Keep coming back to the purpose of the meeting—to develop an appropriate IEP for your child.

What do I do after the IEP (and before the next one)?

Hurray! You've successfully completed an IEP for your child. Now that you have a well-written IEP, you may want to schedule a follow-up meeting after a month or so, so that you and the rest of the team can talk about how things are going. Watching your child work at school and talking with the staff will help you keep track of your child's progress.

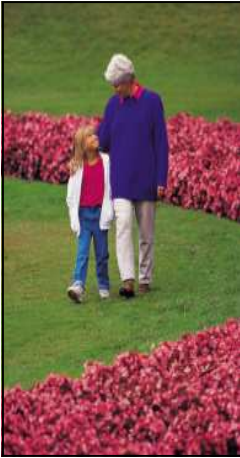
Even when you have done many IEPs, you can still forget things from one IEP to the next. So, after each meeting, jot down any thoughts you have about the IEP and the process. What did you like and not like? What would you do differently next time? Keep your notes and read them before the next IEP meeting. Keep in mind that developing an IEP is a learning process. With time it gets easier. Even though it can be hard, when parents and schools truly work together, the process works and the best results for your child can be realized.

Remember, if you ever feel that the IEP needs to be changed, you can request another IEP meeting.



"You need to be clear in your mind on where you can and cannot compromise"





Geneva View Point:

For this month Geneva View Point, we asked many local parents for their experiences in seeking assessment in Geneva and below are their answers to our question.

Did you consider getting your child assessed in Geneva?

“Yes, we have had two attempts at having our son assessed. The first was aborted within the first five minutes of meeting the psychologist who “had not been able to read” the questionnaire we sent to her beforehand. As a result, she proclaimed that our son was too young to be assessed and we should go home –we were none too pleased, especially having taken time off work to be there.

The second assessment was more successful but far from ideal, requiring a very long journey in the car to get there. The diagnosis, “our son has ADHD” – which shocked us all as no-one has ever suggested he has ADHD, either before or after the assessment. On further questioning, the psychologist did admit that the symptoms have to be present in at least two locations for an accurate diagnosis to be made. Nevertheless the results were disturbing and perhaps due more to the fact that our son had been stuck in a car for two hours before being “released” to start immediately on his assessment. “

Parent name supplied.

“Our child was born in England and was fully assessed there before we left. We also had a reassessment in the UK a couple of years later, in readiness for a return to the UK school system which, in the event, never materialised. Now we find we might be moving to Belgium next year, and we will need an assessment for school entry there, but it is a requirement that this be done in Belgium.

While in Switzerland our child has been regularly assessed by the Development Unit of the Cantonal Hospital. His schools and therapists have also regularly assessed progress and met together to discuss programmes. We have been very happy with these arrangements and have not sought additional independent assessments.”

Parent name supplied.

“I needed to get my child assessed when we moved to Geneva, but I started out with a Paediatric consultant in the UK (my home) before beginning the round of assessments in the area. The (ECOLINT) school psychologists were helpful but overstretched. We used a British/Australian ed psych, who has since relocated, to do a baseline assessment. Following that I picked the brains of friends in the area who had gone through the same process - hearing specialist, psychologist etc. It was hard work because I had to pull together all the assessment results and present them to the psychologist, I also had to ask for specific tests to be done for a more “rounded” view of my child. The school (ecolint) was hugely supportive of anything that would enable them to understand how to teach my child more effectively.”

A

“Not really -- I didn't feel there was anyone really competent enough or independent enough to do it. The school psychologist could have done a brief assessment, but she was mother-tongue French, and for problems such as dyslexia, this did not seem ideal. Also, I was wary of relying on school personnel, as they could have come under pressure because of the question of resources. I did find some local specialists, but overall I am glad that we went to London for my child's main assessment.”

J.H. (Parent 2000-2004)



ASK - Summer Camps, July - August 2007



Pregny Campus, International School of Geneva

FUN AND RECREATION ACTIVITIES FOR THREE AGE GROUPS, 5-7, 8-10, 11-13.

ASK'S SUMMER CAMP, concentrates on **social skills development** for children by providing a supportive learning and recreational environment supervised by professional staff.

- 1 Does your child have difficulties making and keeping friends?
- 2 Does she or he hardly ever get invited to birthdays and/or sleepovers?
- 3 Does she or he feel nobody likes her or him?

Children with socialisation problems can learn to develop their potential for fruitful relationships by participating in structured games and fun activities involving:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Learning cooperation | Sharing |
| Positive interaction | Building imagination |
| Empathy & assertiveness | Self control & self awareness |

- 1 First session: July 09 to July 13th - 09:00 to 16:00,
- 2 Second session: July 16th to July 20th - 09:00 to 16:00
- 3 Third session: August 6th to August 10th - 09:00 to 16:00
- 4 Fourth session: August 13th to August 17th - 09:00 to 16:00

Ask's Summer Camp has a very low student to staff ratio (two students per staff member) in order to maximise the beneficial impact of the experience.

Enrollment has begun for the summer on a first come first served basis.

Regrettably spaces are limited.

Fees: One week session CHF775, Two week session CHF1350.

Parents with two or more children attending the programme or parents who wish to volunteer to help will receive a substantial discount.

For more information and to register please contact: Joy Tong on 079 566 7078 or Elaine Curry on 022 733 6241 or email: info@allspecialkids.org

ASK CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MAY 2007

- COFFEE MORNING- Informal Get Together*

3rd May - 10 - 12:00hr

RSVP to Gehl coffeemornings@allspecialkids.org for direction and further details

- EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT BY DR. GAVIN REID

8th to 11th May 2007

Registration and Information, please contact info@allspecialkids.org

No Activities in June. Our summer programmes starts in July. See detailed camp information on page 13.

Identification and Assessment of Dyslexia: Strategies for Parents and Teachers

Presented by Dr. Gavin Reid

University of Edinburgh, Red Rose School, Lancashire, UK and
REACH Learning Center, Vancouver, BC, Canada

Date: Tuesday 8th May 2007

Time: 19.00-21.30

Place: Webster University, Jura Bldg. Rm# 13

Fees: Members CHF65, Non-Members 130CHF,

RSVP to info@allspecialkids.org

This presentation will focus on three aspects

- * Early identification
- * What teachers and parents should look out for
- * Comments on tests available and how test results can be implemented in practice

What will the presentation be about? The presentation will:

- * Provide insights into our understanding of the assessment of dyslexia,
- * Discuss a range of strategies in relation to observation and identification for parents and teachers,
- * Show how the assessment results can be put into practice
- * Highlight the implications of assessment for learning at home and in the classroom
- * Comment on the Special Needs Assessment Profile (SNAP) which seeks to identify seventeen different characteristics in special needs

Farewell to two of our greatest Friends and Colleagues

"Some people come into our lives and quickly go. Others stay awhile, make footprints on our hearts and we are never, ever the same." -- Unknown



Sadly, ASK will bid farewell to two of our greatest friends and colleagues, Elaine and Lemont Curry, who will return to U.S. this summer. They are both co-founders of ASK. Elaine also serves as Vice-President. Elaine has been instrumental in much of our recent progress and her co-leadership has been one of our greatest inspirations and thoroughly appreciated. Elaine and Lemont are Pastor and Deacon of "Outreach Deliverance Center" church founded by her in 1994. They are both members of the Community Gospel Outreach Choir founded and sponsored by the church under Elaine's leadership. We will surely miss her sunny smile, her unstoppable enthusiasm, her boundless and positive energy. All of us at ASK wish Elaine and Lemont a happy return to their home country and good luck in all their future endeavours and adventures in life.