

Student-Led IEPs

Purpose & Overview

Student-led IEPs shift the focus from adults talking *about* the student to students having a voice *in* their education. Even young learners can share their strengths, preferences, and goals when supported with the right scaffolds.

Research shows that student involvement increases engagement, self-determination, and postsecondary success.

This worksheet provides **practical strategies, sentence stems, scripts, and templates** to help students actively participate in their IEP process.

Why Student Involvement Matters

- **Legal expectation:** IDEA requires students to be invited to transition IEPs at age 14 (in some states, earlier).
 - **Skill building:** Develops self-advocacy, communication, and executive function.
 - **Motivation:** Students are more engaged when goals reflect their input.
 - **Family & staff trust:** Demonstrates that the student is central to the plan.
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Levels of Student Involvement

Not every student will immediately lead their IEP meeting. Start with scaffolds and gradually build independence.

Level	What It Looks Like	Example
Awareness	Student attends meeting, listens, answers 1–2 questions.	“What do you like about school?”
Participation	Student shares strengths, needs, or goals using sentence starters.	“One thing I need help with is...”
Leadership	Student presents a slideshow or script, introduces team members, discusses goals.	Student introduces their IEP meeting and reviews progress data.

Sample Student-Led Scripts & Sentence Stems

Introductions

- “Hi, my name is _____. Thank you for coming to my meeting.”
- “These are my teachers and family members here today.”

Strengths

- “I am good at _____.”
- “I like _____.”
- “My favorite subject is _____ because _____.”

Needs

- “I need help with _____.”
- “I work best when _____.”
- “One thing that’s hard for me is _____.”

Accommodations/Supports

- “Something that helps me in class is ____.”
- “I use ____ to stay focused.”
- “I learn best when teachers ____.”

Goals

- “This year, I want to get better at ____.”
- “I would like to work on ____.”
- “When I grow up, I want to ____, so I need to learn ____.”

Practical Tools for Student Involvement

Student Profile One-Pager

Section	Example
My Strengths	“I like building things and I’m good at drawing.”
My Challenges	“I get frustrated when there are too many directions at once.”
What Helps Me	“Checklists and headphones help me focus.”
My Goals	“I want to read a chapter book on my own.”

Student-Led Slide Deck Template

- Slide 1: About Me (photo, interests, hobbies)
- Slide 2: My Strengths
- Slide 3: What’s Hard for Me
- Slide 4: How I Learn Best
- Slide 5: My Goals for This Year
- Slide 6: Questions for My Team

Example in Action

Student: 9th grader with ADHD and SLD in written expression.

- Prepares with case manager: builds a 6-slide deck.
- In meeting: introduces team, shares strengths (math, sports), challenges (writing essays), and supports (graphic organizers, breaks).
- States personal goal: “I want to be able to write a 5-paragraph essay without so much help.”
- **Outcome:** Team drafts writing goal aligned to his voice, increasing motivation and buy-in.

Common Barriers & Solutions

Barrier	Solution
Student feels anxious or unprepared	Provide script, practice role-play before meeting.
Student doesn’t see value	Connect goals to their interests and future.
Staff see it as “extra work”	Use one-pager or slide template to make it simple.
Family not supportive	Share benefits of student involvement, invite them to co-create.

Action Starter: Try Tomorrow

- Choose one student and create a **student profile one-pager** together.
- Use it at the next IEP meeting—have the student introduce themselves and share one strength + one goal.
- Gradually expand their role in future meetings.

