Regular education teachers have always played a critical role in the education of special education students. In 1999, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) finally codified this fact by requiring that regular education teachers become mandatory PPT members. Yet, over a decade later, many regular education teachers still are not active participants in PPT meetings. As a result, their critical input and recommendations do not receive the full consideration necessary to determine the students’ educational needs, including information that would enable the students to be involved successfully in the general education curriculum.

The Q&A below is intended to ensure that regular education teachers are informed about their right to fully participate in PPT meetings so that they can become the key contributors that the law expects them to be. Their greater involvement in PPT meetings also will enable their students and the other team members to benefit from their insight.

As a classroom teacher, what should I do if I believe that a student’s accommodations are inappropriate or a goal or objective may need to be modified?

A teacher always can and should request a PPT meeting if he/she believes that a change may be necessary in the student’s IEP. Make your request in writing so that there is a written record of it.

Must/can a regular education teacher stay for the entire PPT meeting?

It is expected that each staff person will be present at least for the portion of the meeting related to his/her specific areas. The law does not specifically state that the regular education teacher must stay for the entire meeting. IDEA does state that the teacher must, to the extent appropriate, (1) determine appropriate positive behavioral interventions and strategies; and (2) determine those supplementary aids and services, program modifications, and supports for school personnel needed to help the child progress toward attaining the annual goals and in the general curriculum. So best practices would expect that the regular education teacher be present for at least those portions of the meeting. However, to ensure that the areas critical to you are handled before you leave the meeting, you can always request that your areas of the IEP (e.g., accommodations, modifications and supports for personnel on page 8 of the IEP) are handled at the beginning of the meeting since there is no requirement that the IEP be reviewed in chronological order.

Which regular education teacher must attend a PPT meeting? What if I wish to attend but am not selected?

For purposes of the PPT, “regular education teacher” can be any regular education teacher of the student. The IDEA regulations states:

“The regular education teacher who serves as a member of a child’s IEP team should be a teacher who is, or may be, responsible for implementing a portion of the IEP, so that the teacher can participate in discussions about how best to instruct the child.”


A March 1999 U.S., Department of Education (USDE) Topic Brief entitled “Regular Education Teachers as IEP Team Members” states:

**ONLY ONE TEACHER REQUIRED ON IEP TEAM; BUT OTHERS MAY ATTEND.**

If a child with a disability has more than one regular education teacher, only one of the teachers is required to be on the IEP team. However, if the participation of more than one of the teachers would be beneficial to the child’s success in school (e.g., in terms of enhancing the child’s participation in the general curriculum), it may be appropriate under the Act and regulations for them to be members of the team and participate.

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**Regular education teachers: Know your rights and become key contributors to the PPT process**

By Robyn Kaplan-Cho, CEA
Reprinted from the HCR Reporter, Spring 2013
So in cases where the student does have more than one regular education teacher responsible for carrying out a portion of the IEP, the administrator can designate which teacher or teachers will serve as PPT members. But even if you are not invited to serve as the regular education teacher, you can make a written request to attend the meeting. This request should explain your reasons for wishing to attend and concerns that you wish to see addressed. This is extremely important, since your input (either in person or in writing) is critical to the development or modification of the IEP. In fact, the 1999 USDPE Topic Brief affirms that by stating, “In a situation in which all of the child’s regular education teachers are not members of the IEP team, the [district] is strongly encouraged to seek input from the teachers who will not be attending.”

**A PPT meeting was held but no regular education teacher was present. Is that legal?**

IDEA allows a parent and the district to agree in writing to excuse a PPT member from the PPT. However, if that member’s area of the curriculum is being modified or discussed at the meeting, the member must submit written input into the development of the IEP before the PPT takes place. If the parents and district cannot agree on whether a required member of the team should be excused, that member must be present at the PPT.

**How should I request supports to help me best implement my portions of the IEP?**

IDEA absolutely recognizes that a staff member may need supports to allow him/her to provide the accommodations and modifications decided on by the PPT. In 1999, the law was changed to require that every IEP include “Frequency and Duration of Supports Required for School Personnel to Implement this IEP.” In Connecticut, it is found at the bottom of page 8. In its IEP Manual, the Connecticut State Department of Education listed examples of personnel supports that would be appropriate under this section. The examples cited are:

1. “All staff who will work with [student’s name] should receive ten hours of disability-specific training in the area of Autism. This training should be provided during the first two weeks of school by [title, role, or competency area of person providing training];”
2. “An instructional assistant (paraprofessional) to be provided to assist the teacher of each general education class which the student attends between now and the next PPT scheduled for January 15, 2007;”
3. “The school psychologist will collaborate with [child’s name] teacher for 20 minutes per week for the first six weeks of school to cooperatively plan activities which will encourage [child’s name] to establish and maintain friendships with classmates;” or
4. “All staff who require [student’s name] to complete written assignments or provide [student’s name] with support during the completion of written assignments will receive at least 4 hours of training in the use of text to speech and work prediction software. Follow-up support will be provided throughout the school year.”

Typically, these supports are in the form of teacher training, paraprofessional support in the classroom or consultation by a special education teacher or related services provider.

**Am I entitled to a copy of my students’ IEPs?**

IDEA does not specifically address whether teachers must receive a written copy of the IEPs of their students. However, the law does state that the district “must ensure that the child’s IEP is accessible to each regular education teacher, related services provider, and any other service provider who is responsible for its implementation.” Furthermore, each teacher must be “informed of his or her specific responsibilities related to implementing the child’s IEP… and the specific accommodations, modifications, and supports that must be provided for the child in accordance with the IEP.”

34 C.F.R Sec. 300.323(d).

It is difficult to imagine how any teacher could be properly informed of these responsibilities without either a copy of the relevant portions of the IEP or a very detailed summary of it.

**Can I express my opinion in a PPT meeting even if it is not in agreement with the administration?**

Yes. The law specifically requires a regular education teacher to serve as a team member because your input is so valuable to the development of an appropriate IEP. You have the right to express your professional opinion regardless of whether it is consistent with that of any other team member(s). Moreover, the law protects you from any retaliation or intimidation resulting from your free and open participation in the PPT meeting. Specifically, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (which references Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964) states that recipients of federal funds, which would include school districts, “shall not intimidate, threaten, coerce or discriminate against any individual for the purpose of interfering with any right or privilege secured by the Act, or because the individual has made a complaint, testified, assisted, or participated in any manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing under this part.” This protection could extend to advocating on behalf of your special education students in a PPT meeting.