

# Communication Options for Families

## Options Available if You Have Questions or Disagree with a Decision of the School

***Families and schools have a “built-in” partnership with the child as the focus. This partnership will grow when parents and school staff work together. Disagreements may happen, but working together improves your child’s education.***

### What can you do if questions or concerns arise?

- ◇ If concerns arise, families are encouraged to first talk directly with the people involved as soon as possible (see local contacts – ex: your child’s teachers, principal, other school administrators)
- ◇ First, call to schedule an informal meeting to discuss the situation
- ◇ Then, prepare for the meeting by making a list of concerns and some possible solutions

### What can you do in the meeting?

- ◇ Identify student strengths and acknowledge what is working
- ◇ Identify concerns of families and educators
- ◇ Use active listening in order to understand the other person’s perspective
- ◇ Ask questions or restate ideas so the team has a clear understanding
- ◇ Work together to suggest some possible options to resolve the concerns
- ◇ Analyze all of the options to see if you can find areas of agreement
- ◇ Discuss what should happen next

### What if concerns are not fully resolved in the meeting?

- ◇ Request a break or ask the IEP team to meet again and consider including additional team members.
- ◇ Call others for suggestions on possible future action (see Communication Options for Families chart).

***Problem solving at the school level gives families and school districts more collaborative options on outcomes for children.***

### Next Steps: What can be done if these attempts at solving problems don’t work?

- ◇ **Facilitated IEP:** An option for early conflict resolution Wisconsin has chosen to make available to families and schools. A neutral, trained professional helps the IEP team with the IEP process. [http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sped\\_wsems](http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sped_wsems)
- ◇ **Mediation:** An option for early conflict resolution available at no cost to families and schools. A mediator helps families and schools work toward resolution on special education conflicts/issues. [http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sped\\_wsems](http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sped_wsems)
- ◇ **IDEA State Complaints:** Anyone who believes a school district violated state or federal special education law has the right to file a complaint with DPI. More information at: [http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sped\\_complain](http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sped_complain)
- ◇ **Due Process Hearings:** Parents, adult students, and schools districts have the right to request due process hearings for special education disputes. More information at: [http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sped\\_dueproc](http://sped.dpi.wi.gov/sped_dueproc)

***Access to WSPEI Family Engagement Coordinators and the WI Mediation System are provided at no cost to parents.***

CESA – Cooperative Educational Service Agency  
DPI – Department of Public Instruction

IEP – Individualized Education Program  
WSPEI – Wisconsin Statewide Parent Educator Initiative

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WSPEI information can be found at: [www.wspei.org](http://www.wspei.org)

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