
CHILD-DRIVEN EXPERIENCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

THERE'S A CEO IN EVERY CHILD!

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WHAT IS A CEO PLANNING MEETING?

A student-focused, strengths-based meeting (similar to a person-centered planning meeting), which will result in a timed Action Plan to support and enhance:

- The student's involvement and progress in the general ed curriculum/environment.
- The hopes and dreams of the student, and his/her family members, peers, and educators.
- The student's IEP/ARD.

The CEO Meeting is an exciting, positive, relaxed, fun-filled meeting that utilizes and values the ideas of the student, the family, classmates/friends, and others who know the student.

WHO ATTENDS A CEO MEETING?

- Student with a disability and family members.
- Classmates and friends (children and/or adults, such as family friends, Sunday School teacher, etc.) of student.
- Student's teacher(s): general ed, special ed, paraprofessional, principal, etc. (all must be people who actually know the student and/or who will work directly with the student in the general ed environment).
- CEO facilitator and recorder.

In order to keep the meeting truly student-focused and to value the expertise of the student and his/her brothers, sisters, friends and classmates, the number of adults and children at the meeting must be equal.

HALLMARKS AND VALUES OF A CEO PLANNING MEETING:

- All efforts and activities are based on the presumption of the full inclusion of the student in the general ed environment, in extra-curricular school activities, and in typical community activities.
- Outside-the-box thinking to create new possibilities for the current school year and for the long-term.
- Incorporates expertise of student, family, friends, and classmates.
- Focuses on a student's strengths, interests, hopes, and dreams; not deficit-based!
- Not a "Circle of Friends"—the CEO process and Action Plan go far beyond!
- Focus is on changing the environment, not attempting to change the child or remediate the disability.

HOW THE CEO APPROACH CAN ENHANCE AND SUPPORT THE IEP/ARD PROCESS:

- Activities of the CEO Action Plan can be incorporated into the student's IEP.
- Abilities, strengths, interests, hopes, and dreams revealed at the CEO meeting can contribute to:
 - writing more accurate and appropriate IEP goals;
 - identifying more appropriate curriculum modifications, assistive technology, and/or other supports;
 - improving teacher/student relationship and enhance teacher effectiveness, as educator(s) get to know "another side" of the student during the CEO meeting.

COMPARISON OF CEO AND IEP/ARD MEETINGS

CEO Meeting:

Includes student, as well as children and adults who know student well.

Strengths-based.

Focuses on changing the environment to effect positive outcomes.

A dynamic, flexible, on-going process that includes student, family, classmates, and others who know the student well, fostering positive relationships.

IEP/ARD Meeting:

Includes primarily adults, many of whom may not really know the student.

Often deficit-based.

Often focuses on changing the student.

Once-a-year meeting; if additional ARD meetings are held, it's usually because someone is mad or "has a problem;" adversarial relationships may be common.

GETTING STARTED: THE PRE-CEO MEETING WITH THE STUDENT, FAMILY, AND FACILITATOR

The facilitator:

- Encourages family to be prepared to share student's strengths, interests, abilities, hopes, and dreams, etc., at the CEO meeting.
- Provides ideas about who should be at the meeting: family members; student's friends and classmates; teachers from school; and/or day care provider, Sunday school teacher, etc. (adults who know child well).
- Emphasizes that the CEO meeting is exciting and fun, more like a party than a meeting; parents can bring refreshments, etc.

The student, family, and facilitator discuss issues to cover at the CEO Meeting:

- Hopes, dreams, and goals for the student;
- Potential outcomes of the meeting, such as:
 - The student will have peer support and friends at school.
 - The student more actively participates in general ed classroom, via instructional strategies, assistive technology devices, different teaching materials, etc.).
 - The student is involved in inclusive extracurricular activities and/or typical community activities.
 - Other issues important to student and family.
- When and where the meeting will be held: at home, school, or other location.
- Who will attend the meeting (family/student can send out written invitations or invite by telephone).
- What accommodations, supports, or assistive technology the student might need at the meeting.

THE CEO MEETING (APPROX 2-3 HOURS)

Before the meeting:

- Facilitator and recorder arrive early to set up.
- Meeting room should have wall space to hang large paper (flip chart sheets or length of “butcher” paper).
- Recorder will write all responses on large paper during meeting, but some headings can be prepared prior to the meeting (the sign-in sheet, “Who Is ___?”, “Hopes, Dreams, Goals,” “Barriers/Strategies”).
- Everyone sits in semi-circle, no table is used (everyone will receive report of meeting from recorder, so no need to take notes—energy should be directed toward active participation during meeting). Younger children can bring books or toys—everyone needs to feel comfortable! Be flexible. For example, if parents of younger participants want/need to come, that’s okay!
- Family can set up refreshments before the meeting starts.

At the meeting:

- Using plain language—not special ed or medical jargon—is a must.
- A friendly, casual atmosphere is maintained: participants are free to enjoy refreshments anytime during the meeting, younger children are free to move around the room and/or play with toys, etc.
- When participants arrive, each signs in with his/her name, relationship to student, and something wonderful about the student. (Recorder writes for children/others who do not write.)
- Facilitator opens the meeting with a “welcome,” and all participants briefly introduce themselves (beginning with the student with a disability and family). Facilitator then shares (1) purpose of the meeting, (2) the values (inclusion and strengths-based), and (3) basic ground rules (one person talks at a time, everyone listens with respect, people can ask questions for clarification, everyone will get copy of report later), and (4) this meeting is the “first step” in the process—the CEO team (all in attendance) is responsible for implementing Action Plan and scheduling on-going meetings.
- Next, facilitator asks the following questions. After each question, Mary responds first, followed by others.
 - “Who is ‘Mary’ [the student with a disability]?” This identifies the strengths, abilities, interests, and other positive attributes of student.
 - “What are your hopes, dreams, and goals for MARY?” Responses to this question can be for the current school year *and* for five, ten, or twenty years down the road. Discussing short- and long-term hopes, dreams, and goals can expand everyone’s thinking and the possibilities for the student’s success.
 - “What are the barriers to achieving the current and future goals and what strategies will help move beyond the barriers?” Facilitator encourages everyone to incorporate MARY’s strengths into solutions.
- Writing the Action Plan is next. *While the purpose of all Action Plan activities is to meet the CEO goals, the activities themselves should not focus specifically on the student (see examples below).* The Action Plan includes:
 - Activities which address the hopes, dreams, and goals for the student, and the strategies to move beyond the barriers discussed. Think outside-the-box! Be unrealistic—the sky’s the limit!
 - Who will do what, how, and by when (specific dates).
 - Date of next CEO Team meeting (without the original facilitator/recorder—others will take these roles, and jobs can be rotated).
- Facilitator closes the meeting with a last question for all: “How do you feel about what happened today?”

After the meeting, recorder transcribes everything from large paper onto regular-sized paper and a copy is given to each participant. The original large paper is given to student/family.

TWO EXAMPLES

SOCIAL: In the past, Mary has had difficulty maintaining friendships with other students. An Action Plan activity/goal could include: "Mrs. Smith [the classroom teacher] will facilitate weekly meetings with her students about playground activities and friendships." (This is an issue that affects many children, not just those with disabilities, so while the *intent* of the activity is to meet Mary's needs, the *outcome* can have a positive effect on all students and the classroom, as a whole.) During the weekly Friendship Meetings, Mrs. Smith and her students discuss the strengths and needs of *all* students, and the students share ideas on how they can help each other develop friendships and ensure positive play at recess. For example, during the CEO meeting, Mrs. Smith learned that Mary has a collection of Barbie dolls. Because some of Mary's classmates were at the CEO meeting, they're also aware of this interest. Mrs. Smith can ask Mary to bring her Barbie collection to the next Friendship Meeting, and the dolls will be used as a prop during brainstorming role-plays. Mrs. Smith (and/or the students) can set some scenarios, such as:

- Two girls are playing with Barbie dolls at recess, and a third girl approaches, asks to play, and is told "no." What should she do? How should she handle the situation? How can the other girls behave differently?
- Emily, Suzanne, and Melissa are playing with Suzanne's Barbie dolls at recess, and Emily begins to change Barbie's outfit. Suzanne shrieks, grabs the doll, and calls Emily names. How could both girls have acted differently? How could this be avoided in the future? What should happen now?

Mrs. Smith and her students can talk about feelings, actions, responses, and different ways of handling these (and other) situations. Following this Friendship Meeting, other students could bring their collections or favorite toys from home, and similar role-play brainstorming sessions can be held during future Friendship Meetings. The subject of these meetings, as well as how they're done, will evolve as the students get to know one another and learn new strategies for successful friendships!

ACADEMIC: One of the CEO goals for Mary is to improve her reading abilities and to be able to fully-participate in classroom reading activities/lessons. During the CEO meeting, one of Mary's classmates suggests that Mary could listen to the story ahead of time. A classmate could read the story to Mary, she could listen to it on tape, or a family member could read it to her at home. Then, during reading group, classmates could do "partner-reading," Mary's partner could help Mary with the words she didn't know, and then the partners could simultaneously read the story out loud (choral reading). To demonstrate her comprehension of the story, Mary could draw pictures, use a combination of pictures and words, turn the story into a song, and/or retell (dictate) her version of the story to someone who could write her words (classmate, parent, etc.).