Including LINKS in IEP Team Meeting

**Rationale:** LINKS serve as invaluable sources of information and solutions. LINK students are literally that; a link that connects a student with ASD to a world of opportunities. LINKS’ daily participation in classroom settings and interaction in non classroom settings affords them the possibility to observe both strengths and challenges that school staff and family members may not logistically have the opportunity to see. LINKS are trusted friends and “safe zones” with the capacity for increasing the ease and; therefore, the participation of the student with ASD. LINKS possess the capacity to analyze situations, support communication by interpreting verbal deficits and/or idiosyncrasies, offer a voice for their friend with ASD who cannot access their own, and engage in problem solving by proposing real life age appropriate solutions.

**Process:** The following steps and resources will lead to successful inclusion of LINKS into an IEP Team Meeting.

Before the meeting:

* Meet with administration to share your goal of LINKS participation in an IEP Team Meeting. Share the above rationale with administration as well as the steps outlined below that you will take to prepare for the LINKS involvement.
* Obtain permission from the Student with Autism’s parent(s) / guardian(s). Share the above rationale to secure consent.
* Reach out to the LINK student(s) that you would like to participate in the IEP Team Meeting. Share the above rationale and inform the LINK student(s) that you will contact their parent(s) / guardian(s) to get permission for their participation.
* Select a time of day to hold the IEP Team Meeting that is least impactful on the LINKS student(s) schedule.
* Pre-meet with LINKS and the Student with Autism (as appropriate) to explain the IEP process and answer any questions that students might have.
  + Explain the sequence and content of each area of the IEP so that students feel informed.
  + Share the [IEP Process LINKS Planning Tool](https://docs.google.com/document/d/184rxXwKwA1qNUEjWVZ3grkEEZickucWkWrhaEqt9gKk/edit?usp=sharing); supporting students in generating thinking / talking points for inclusion in the PLAAFP discussion.
  + Assure students that their voice is important and that team members want to listen.

During the meeting:

* Start the meetings with introductions; emphasizing appreciation to the LINKS.
* Explain the sequence and content of each area of the IEP; referring to the whiteboard where the IEP Process is outlined, so that all team members feel informed.
* Assure all team members that their voice is important.

Following the meeting:

* Incorporate goal areas into case conferences; utilizing the [Case Conference Meeting Template](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UeTcaz1quDHa2oIlAtfTxnPXIot-YKRhi1zCIhZLsjU/edit?usp=sharing) to keep a record of meeting content.
* Share case conference meeting notes with IEP team members.