Empowering student voice. Parents should talk with their adolescents about what they want to say, and help them phrase and practice statements before the meeting, or help write notes or an outline of what to say. Parents and teachers can use coaching as a selected instructional approach to teach students about their appropriate role in IEP meetings; they may also assist young adults by developing a series of questions to elicit information to bring to these meetings (see box, “Pre-IEP Meeting Questions to Elicit Student Participation”; Berry & Hardman, 1998).

All team members, including the parents, should know the student will be participating in the meetings and assume supportive roles. Allow for sufficient time to facilitate student participation; parents and students should reciprocate positive reinforcement for their participation in this process. James E. Martin, a national expert on student involvement in transition planning, reminds everyone that this is the student’s meeting (personal communication, November 17, 2008). See box, “Promoting Student Participation and Ownership of the Process” for suggested strategies parents and practitioners can use to teach foundational skills that promote successful student participation in, and eventual ownership of, IEP and transition planning meetings (FACER, 1996; Berry & Hardman, 1998), and which include the third SDIP step, evaluation and self-regulation. Empowering the student to react to IEP team actions will strengthen the motivation to provide more information, seek more involvement (perhaps also identifying informational or skill needs to do so), and place themselves increasingly into the process.

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