



MAPs: Making Action Plans

The MAPs process was developed several decades ago as a person-centered approach to planning a future for a person with a developmental disability, to ensure that their voice was not only heard but was at the center of futures planning. The discussion and contributions from those who loved and cared for the individual would lead to decisions related to education, future employment, living arrangements, and socialization opportunities. This process is intended to rely on the person's desires as told by the person and/or understood by those who knew their strengths and communications.

MCIE has slightly adapted the approach to fit the context of inclusive educational planning, as a first step that includes the family, the learner (if age 18 or older or with family permission), and educators and other service providers who know the learner. Sometimes siblings, other family members, neighbors, or classmates are invited to the meeting, or certain portions of the meeting. When MCIE supports a MAPs meeting for a learner, the goal is to answer the core MAPs questions in the context of being included in the coming school year, as a member of the school community, and in consideration of their life after school.

WHAT IS AN EDUCATIONAL MAPs MEETING?

MAPs is a process to begin the planning for a child or youth who may need extensive or complex supports to navigate the barriers in a school's environment, curriculum, or routines and develop a sense of belonging as they participate in their grade level classes and settings with peers. The MAPs process always includes the family and all questions are centered on the family's response first. This process is useful for any learner who is being included for the first time, who is transitioning from a more restrictive setting to an inclusive setting, or when a school team wants to improve participation, membership, or performance in social and academic areas.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

- ✓ The **family** (*This includes parents, siblings, grandparents, and whoever the family wants to bring.*)
- ✓ **Sending faculty** (*This includes staff from the current/recent school placement and is usually the administrator and two staff members who know the learner well.*)
- ✓ **Receiving faculty** (*This includes an administrator, general and special educators, and other support personnel who provide direct instruction. These include general and special educators, related services providers, English learning instructors, and others*)

who provide supports and services)

- ✓ The **learner** (The family may choose to have the child present for the full meeting or only for certain questions.)
- ✓ **Friends** of the learner (Other learners often have valuable input and may be present for part of the MAPs meeting to state their hopes for their friend, their friend's strengths, and supports that are appropriate to the age of the learner. The family usually decides who may attend based on the relationships and experiences of neighbors and learners in the school.)
- ✓ **Two Facilitators** (These are two individuals who are knowledgeable in the MAPs process. One leads the questions; and one records the team's input on the charts or electronic documents.)

Assumptions of the MAPs Process:

- ◆ **Inclusion:** Planning is for successful participation **in general education classes** and in other settings within the neighborhood school.
- ◆ **Individualization:** The team focuses on the **learner's unique gifts and support needs** across all activities in the school day and year.
- ◆ **Teamwork and Collaboration:** This begins or expands upon a structure for various educators and service providers to work as a team for creative solution-finding.
- ◆ **Flexibility:** Initial plans may need to be modified as the learner **adjusts** to the school, the team learns more about the learner's abilities, and peers are engaged as partners in the social and academic life of the learner.
- ◆ **Competence:** The team assumes that regardless of the learner's apparent abilities, it is less dangerous to assume that the learner is competent and to provide access to grade-level content than to presume incompetence and limit educational opportunities.

THE MEETING SETTING

- **In-Person Meetings.** Participants may meet at the school in a media center or other school setting.

- Participants are seated in a half-circle, preferably **without a table**, to help distinguish the MAPs meeting from an IEP meeting. Several large chart papers are posted around the room with one key question on the top of each.
 - Participants have NO tablet, paper/pen, or other note taking device.
 - One facilitator stands in front of the group and leads the discussion using the questions to guide the conversation while the other person – the note taker – records responses on the chart paper.
 - This MAPs meeting usually takes at least 1½ to 2 hours.
- **Remote Meetings.** Alternatively, the meeting can take place on a virtual platform such as Zoom, Teams, or Google Meet.
 - It is essential that everyone has their video on with the microphone muted unless speaking.
 - Notes may be visible or taken off-screen.
 - Participants contribute with no interruptions.
 - The Facilitator leads the discussion and encourages participation; the note taker may ask for clarification.
 - This MAPs meeting usually takes at least 1 ¼ to 1 ½ hours.

In either case, expectations for the participants (i.e., “be present” in the meeting, wait to ask questions, contribute information conversationally, etc.) are reviewed before the meeting begins. All are expected to contribute from a strengths-based approach to planning.

THE FACILITATION PROCESS

Opening: The facilitator asks each participant to introduce themselves and state their role/relationship to the learner. The facilitator then states the purpose of this meeting for information gathering and discovery, not for debate or for detailed problem-solving. Participants are reminded that notes will be taken by one of the facilitators so they can listen and contribute without worrying about taking notes. The responses on the chart papers or electronic document will be summarized and distributed to all participants after the meeting.

Questioning Process: The facilitator poses the questions one at a time, first to the family, and then encourages all who know the child best to contribute. Initially, the receiving faculty may be listeners, but as they become comfortable with the process and familiar with the learner, they may have contributions to make. The facilitator keeps everyone focused and contributing and monitors the use of time. A “parking lot” chart can be used for

questions/concerns that are beyond the scope of the meeting so that they can be addressed at a later time.

THE QUESTIONS

The following sequence of questions generally works well to guide the discussion. The facilitator may vary the order of the questions or construct a similar set of questions to suit the individual situation. The “fears/nightmares” question may be omitted if the learner is present, or it may be framed as a “barriers” question to identify issues to be addressed.

- ✓ What is _____’s **history**?
- ✓ What are your **Hopes and Dreams** for _____ over the next year and into the future?
- ✓ What are your **Fears/Nightmares** for _____ over the next year and into the future?
- ✓ **Who is** _____? (personality, motivators, likes, dislikes)
- ✓ What are _____’s unique **strengths, gifts and talents**?
- ✓ What are _____’s **support needs** for successful participation?
- ✓ What do we need to do to make this happen? (**Action Plan**)



The facilitators are responsible for summarizing the MAPs meeting input and distributing it to all participants.

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