

Birthday Party “Story”

Time Allotment:

3 minutes

Materials:

Birthday Party “story” Resource

Imagine being a small child and hearing your parents talk about your birthday party. You hear the excitement in their voices as they talk and plan, starting with the theme for the party, deciding on who to invite, and who will do each job. As the time draws closer, you hear more and more conversations about your birthday party, and so you know it will be coming soon. And then your birthday comes and goes, but no one ever invites you to your party. “Maybe they just forgot to invite me,” you think.

The next year, you again hear your parents discuss your birthday party. Once again you hear about all the plans, your birthday comes and goes, but no one invites you to your party. “It must not be important for me to be there,” you think.

The following year, you once again hear about the birthday party. You barely notice the excited tone in their voices as they decide on the theme and who shall be invited. Your birthday comes and goes but no one ever invites you. Now you think parties are not important at all.

Several years later, when you become a teenager, you barely catch a snippet of a conversation about your birthday party. But since you have never been invited to your parties, you know that your presence is not important. But this time you receive an invitation to your party! You are surprised, confused, and even scared. You ask your parents why you received an invitation and they say that since you are a teenager you are old enough to help with everything. You can decide the theme, and who will come and decide who will do the different jobs. But you respond by saying, “Why would I want to become involved now? If these birthday parties were supposed to be my parties, why wasn’t I invited all along. Why didn’t I get to help decide whom to invite? Why didn’t I get to help choose who would do the different jobs?” Your parents say, “We thought you were not old enough to help.” “Now I am so old that I do not know how to help with any of it, you have been doing it for me all these years. Just keep on doing it without me.”

Now, imagine this scenario again, but this time insert *IEP meetings* in place of *birthday parties*.

Students with disabilities hear their teachers and parents talk about the IEP meetings, they hear about goals and services. They hear about who will attend but students rarely receive invitations to attend. Students may decide that an IEP meeting is an opportunity for adults to talk negatively about all the problems that students are having in school. Students may decide that attending their IEP is not important since no one shares any information about the meeting. Students with disabilities may decide, “just keep doing the meeting without me.”