

Parent Advocacy Toolkit

Preparing for Your Child's IEP Meeting

Purpose

An IEP meeting can feel overwhelming for parents, but it doesn't have to be. Families are equal members of the IEP team, and preparation builds confidence, clarity, and collaboration. This toolkit helps parents understand the process, gather information, and prepare questions to make sure their child's voice and needs are fully represented.

Understanding Your Role

Parents are essential team members of the IEP process. You know your child best. The school team brings professional expertise, but you bring lived experience. The best IEPs are built when both types of knowledge work together.

Before the Meeting: Preparation Steps

Step	What to Do	Why It Helps
1. Review the Current IEP	Note what's working and what isn't.	Helps focus discussion on progress and unmet needs.
2. Gather Data from Home	Observe homework patterns, meltdowns, motivation, or growth.	Adds real-world context beyond school hours.
3. Review Progress Reports	Highlight unclear data or goals.	Ensures you understand how progress is measured.
4. Draft Parent Input Statement	Summarize your child's strengths, needs, and priorities.	Becomes part of the official IEP record.
5. Plan Questions in Advance	Clarify confusing terms, ask about supports or next steps.	Keeps meeting focused and productive.

Parent Input Statement Template

My Child's Strengths:

(e.g., curious, creative, strong visual learner)

My Child's Challenges:

(e.g., transitions, attention, frustration with writing)

What's Working Well:

(e.g., small group instruction, sensory breaks, patient teachers)

What's Not Working:

(e.g., missing assignments due to executive functioning difficulties)

My Priorities for This Year:

(e.g., increase independence, build social confidence, improve reading stamina)

(Tip: Email this to your IEP team 2–3 days before the meeting—it will be documented in the Parent Concerns section.)

Questions to Ask During the Meeting

Topic	Sample Questions
Progress	“Can you show me data on how my child is progressing toward each goal?”
Services	“How often will this service occur, and where?”
General Education Access	“How will my child be included in general education classes?”
Accommodations	“What does this support look like in real life? Can you show me an example?”
Behavior/Emotional Support	“What strategies will the team use to prevent triggers and teach replacement skills?”
Collaboration	“How will I receive communication about my child's progress?”

After the Meeting: Follow-Up

Step	What to Do	Why It Helps
1. Review the Draft IEP	Ensure all decisions are reflected accurately.	Prevents misunderstandings before finalization.
2. Clarify Action Steps	Know who's responsible for what.	Keeps everyone accountable.
3. Ask for a Copy	Keep a dated copy of the finalized IEP.	Builds your parent record file.
4. Stay Engaged	Check in regularly with teachers.	Reinforces partnership and ensures consistency.

Communication Tips

Scenario	Helpful Language
Disagreeing Respectfully	"I appreciate your perspective. Here's what I've observed at home..."
Requesting Data	"Could we review the most recent data to help guide our decision?"
Clarifying Next Steps	"Just to confirm, when will this support begin?"
Following Up in Writing	"Thank you for the meeting today. Here's a quick recap of what I understood..."

Building a Positive Partnership

- Approach meetings as collaboration, not confrontation.
- Presume positive intent, but don't be afraid to ask for clarification.
- Focus on shared goals: what's best for your child's access, learning, and independence.

- Express appreciation when strategies work. It encourages continuity.
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Parent Advocacy Reflection

- What helps my child feel safe and successful at school?
 - Which supports are essential, and which can be faded over time?
 - What would success look like for my child this year?
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IEP Binder Essentials Checklist

- Current IEP & progress reports
 - Recent evaluations
 - Parent input statements
 - Communication logs or emails
 - Work samples (showing strengths/challenges)
 - Behavior or incident notes (if applicable)
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Action Starter

- Fill out the **Parent Input Statement** on page one of this worksheet.
- Email it to your child's special education teacher before the next IEP meeting.
- Bring two printed copies—one for you, one for the team—to keep the conversation student-centered.

