

IEP 911! Part III

by Linda Simpson This article is a continuation of Part II: IEP Meeting Success Are you a parent of a child with a learning disability? The deck is stacked against you for achieving a quality, special education IEP. Learn how to get the best possible program for your child.

1. In Part II, study the "IEP Success Method." (Gather data from experts that present evidence of a deficit, list the student's needs due to the deficit, document the legal rights to these services, and organize your parent attachments and presentations in that format.)
2. Review legal information and rights.
3. Create your own Parent Assessment on a piece of paper. At the top put your families' / your child's vision of your child's future. College? Career? Better grades? More friends? Make sure the school is aware of their dreams.
4. Next, list at least three strengths, and the student's main learning style. Below, list challenges, diagnosis, or weaknesses you are aware of, leaving space between. Point out any very low test scores, test scores that are going down, or grades that are going down.
5. If you have any test results with "labels," do the following: On the Parent Assessment along with challenges make sure you list deficits documented by professionals in the testing such as ADD, visual processing, emotionally disturbed. Write down what expert/s applied that label and when.
6. Next to all your challenges list the evidence that proves your child has this weakness (observations, grades, teacher notes, research, doctor's diagnosis). Make sure you added any diagnosis or labels, followed by the date and name of the expert who attached that label to your child.
7. Draw a straight line. Draw a line through the middle and label it with your child's current age and grade. If there are any scores more than two grades or years above your child's current (or standard scores 13 or above), mark these on the chart. Look for any very low scores more than two years below age or grade level (or standard scores of 1, 2, 3, 4.) Now add the very lowest scores to the chart showing them to the left of your child's current age/grade level. Pay attention and point out very low scores and huge differences between scores. (If you have not received the test results from the school, you should postpone the meeting if possible).
8. Grades and tests: Get out report cards and tests from the past few years. Create a chart that shows you any declining grades or test scores. 2 years ago 1 year ago today +/-? Math Read write/spell history test1 etc.
9. Did you list any challenges but see no test covering that area? Circle these on your Parent Assessment and put a question mark above. During the meeting, you'll need to ask why these areas were not tested. You need a complete picture to have a good plan.
10. Test results should include some kind of IQ score or abilities measure as well as achievement measures. Look for the words verbal, IQ, performance, full-scale. These may be shown as percents. Make a note of these ability measures on your Parent Assessment sheet. Is there a big difference between your child's ability, and how much they achieve in school? Does this ability score seem like a reasonable number to you? If it's missing, ask about it.
11. These things can help your child meet their educational goals: research based remediations, recreation therapy, related services, accommodations, assistive technology modifications, placement, positive behavior plans, supplemental devices, and strategies. Now take your list of challenges and try to think of one or more things you think could help your child overcome or minimize that issue. For example, if reading is a major issue, you might list books on tape, homework assignments given orally or in handouts, resource class, etc. Put these ideas on your form next to the challenges. See A Bigger Boat for an extensive list of services and accommodations.
12. If behavior or emotionally disturbed is a main issue or the school's main issue, write down positive behavior plan as a need (and tomorrow make sure the school does not propose a long list of actions/punishments with no positive plan).
13. What would you like your child to achieve during the year? Not too easy, not too hard, can be measured by any professional and understood by you. i.e. "Want student to increase reading level 1.2 grade levels by next year." Add a goal below each challenge.
14. Create a short Parent Agenda. List things you absolutely need to discuss in the meeting. List 4-7 items including reviewing your concerns.
15. If your child is entering a new school, junior high, high school, or near graduation, they'll need a transition plan. Do a rough draft of a transition plan - what they need to make this transition and what might help them make this transition.
16. Bring to the meeting: a. Parent Assessment sheet copied over and titled "Parent Attachment" b. Parent Agenda c. Grades, test data and assessment charts and sketches d. Transition Plan draft if needed e. A note taker
17. In Part II, read the IEP Meeting Mottos.
18. Cover all your ideas from the Parent Attachment. The main question is "Will these services help my child in making more than minimal progress towards realistic goals?" No progress, backwards progress and minimal progress are not enough. The meeting attendees must consider your ideas observations. NOWHERE IN THE LAW DOES IT SAY THE SCHOOL HAS TO FOLLOW ALL YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS.
19. If the school did not send your student's test results in advance, and you still meet, you might need to hold off signing the IEP until you can review the report, and see if you need to add anything to the IEP. Also, since you did not share any of your information with the school ahead of time, they may need more time to go over your requests.
20. Thank the "case carrier" (person in charge of your child's IEP at the school) for their help. This person will be your main point of contact while your child is at this school. You need them as a friend.
21. After the meeting, go back and do it right. Get additional testing done if needed. Read, research, and get organized. Prepare for the next meeting. Get IEP help if needed.

About the Author

Linda Simpson, MBA, is the parent of learning disabled children and a specialist on [Special Education IEP](#), as well as the author of "A Bigger Boat: Surviving the Treacherous Waters of the IEP Process, A Parent's Workbook" and "500 Quick Tips & Helpful Hints for the IEP Process." Book ordering information is available at www.biggerboat4iep.com.

