

Navigating the IEP Process:

Practical Tools for Families

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Before We Get Started

Online Resource Library

Questions & Discussion

Contact me any time



Goals for Today

Help you become

**More
Informed**

**More
Prepared**

**More
Confident**

**More
Effective**

When navigating your child's IEP process



You don't need to understand
everything today.

You just need to learn
how to ask better questions.





The IEP Process

Why Order Matters

The IEP Process: From Needs to Progress

A Logical Sequence That Builds Success



Evaluation *(the foundation)*

Everything starts with evaluations and data collection. They identify your child's area of need.



Goals

Goals should directly address each documented area of need.



Supports & Services

Supports and services are based on what your child needs to make meaningful progress on their goals.



Placement

The IEP team decides where services can be effectively provided in the Least Restrictive Environment.



Implementation

The IEP is implemented with fidelity by the school team.



Progress Monitoring

Progress must be meaningful, not minimal. If progress is not being made, the plan must be revisited.



Building the Next Chapter

Every IEP should build the skills your child needs for the next chapter in their journey



Questions

“If it isn’t in writing,
it didn’t happen.”

- Advocates Everywhere





Documentation

Collect · Organize · Tell the Story

Collect Your Documents

Every document tells part of your child's story

Collect What the School Has Given You

Evaluations, IEPs, Progress Reports, PWNs

Make an Education Record Request

Have everything the school has in hand

Collect Any Other Documents/Draft Documents

Private evals, referral letters, provider notes, drafts for upcoming meetings

Get Organized

Physical binder & digital library



Build a timeline. Discover the story.

Transform records into a story you can understand & share

- ✓ Start with today and work backward
- ✓ Focus on the events that changed the story
- ✓ Add detail where it matters most
- ✓ Update it as your child's story continues
- ✓ Help others quickly understand your child's story



**Don't just organize records
Organize the story.**



Questions



Data Review

Understanding Your Records

**You don't know
what you don't know.**



Start With Evaluations

Don't start with the scores, read the summary first

Were findings and recommendations explained?

Have needs been clearly identified?

Does it align with the assessment plan?



**If I had to explain my child's strengths & needs to someone else,
could I do it after reading this report?**

What if I Disagree

Sometimes an evaluation doesn't tell the whole story

Request an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)

- Private evaluator of your choice, at public expense
- No explanation required from parents
- If denied, the district must defend its evaluation through due process



Parents have the right to question whether an evaluation fully reflects their child's needs

How to Approach an IEP

Start with needs, not services

Accuracy & Completeness

Is it accurate?

Are all required components included?

Does it include everything discussed?

Identified Needs

Are present levels current and needs identified?

Are goals, supports and services aligned with identified needs?

Does the placement feel appropriate?

Parent Participation

Does it include my concerns & input?



You may agree to all, part or none of the IEP



Goals & Progress

Measure What Matters

S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Specific

Is the skill being addressed clearly defined?

Measurable

Can it be accurately measured? How will it be measured?

Appropriately Ambitious

Is the goal realistically attainable/ambitious for this child?

Relevant

Is it based on this child's unique needs?

Time-bound

Is there a clear timeline for mastery?



Example of a S.M.A.R.T Goal

Given a 2nd grade passage
Bonnie will read 100 WCPM
in 4 out of 5 trials
by 6/1/27
as measured by ORF assessment data



Reviewing Progress Reports

Progress isn't measured by opinion. It's measured by data

Is every goal included?

Is progress supported by data?

Is your child making **meaningful progress**?



**When a child is not making adequate progress
the IEP team must revisit and adjust the plan**



STUDENT PROGRESS REPORT

Date: 10/30/26

Reporting Period: Q1

Student Name:	Bonnie Klein	Student ID:	123456	Grade:	2nd
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Goal Information	
Title of Goal:	Academic Achievement–Reading Fluency
Goal Area:	Reading

Measurable Annual Goal		
Given a 2nd grade passage, Bonnie will read 100 WCPM, in 4 out of 5 trials, by 6/1/27, as measured by ORF assessment data.		
Target Date	Mastery	Method of Measurement
06/01/27	100 WCPM	ORF assessment data

Progress toward Goal	Status
Bonnie has not yet met this goal, but is making good progress.	Making Progress





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Progress Monitoring Data		
Date	WCPM	Notes
9/9/26	60	ORF Assessment
9/16/26	68	ORF Assessment
9/23/26	58	ORF Assessment
9/30/26	70	ORF Assessment
10/7/26	70	ORF Assessment

Progress toward Goal	Status
Bonnie has not yet met this goal, but is making good progress.	Making Progress

Overall Comments
Bonnie was given ORF assessments as follows: 9/9 WCPM=60, 9/16 WCPM=68, 9/23 WCPM=58, 9/30 WCPM=70, 10/7 WCPM=70. Her highest WCPM for Q1=70, a meaningful increase from her baseline of 58. If she continues this rate of progress, we expect mastery by the end of the year. Copies of the five assessments are attached.





Prior Written Notice

The District's Written Explanation

What is Prior Written Notice

The most important document you may have never heard of

Prior Written Notice is required whenever the district decides to:

- ✓ Evaluate or decline an evaluation
- ✓ Determine eligibility
- ✓ Change eligibility
- ✓ Change services, accommodations or placement
- ✓ Change the educational program
- ✓ Approve or deny a **parent request** related to special education



The Explanation Matters

Every PWN should clearly explain the district's decisions

What the district is proposing/refusing

Why it made that decision

Data that was relied upon

Options considered and why they were rejected

Your procedural safeguards - what you can do if you disagree



If it is important, ask for it in writing and ask for it in the PWN



Questions



Meeting Prep

Prepare with Purpose

In the Weeks Before the Meeting

Preparation helps you participate with confidence

Collect Your Thoughts

Review timeline and records

List concerns / questions / requests

Write down your child's strengths

Prepare a meeting agenda

Send the Team a Letter

Who will attend with you

Meeting Accommodations

Request draft documents

Plan to record



Create and share a parent concerns statement in advance

Help me understand...
Can you explain that?



Meeting Day

You don't need all the answers—you just need to ask good questions

Before the Meeting Starts

- Arrive early & get settled

- Choose your seat intentionally

- When you arrive – unpack

During the Meeting

- Ask for breaks if overwhelmed

- Make sure all concerns are discussed

- Request PWN for any requests or denials

- If you need a continuation, schedule it before leaving

- Take documents home to review before signing



After the Meeting

The meeting may be over, but the work isn't

Immediate Follow-up

- Create and distribute your own meeting recap

- Document agreements and next steps

- Send follow-up notes to the team

Review & Documentation

- Review the final IEP carefully

- Document disagreements on signature pages

- Respond in writing to inaccurate PWNs



— *If it isn't in writing, it didn't happen*

Navigating the IEP Process

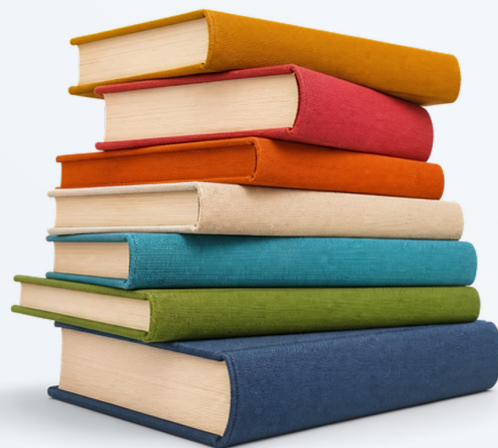
From Needs to Progress

Building the Next Chapter





Questions



SSEA

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