

IEP MEETING PREPARATION TIMELINE

FOR PARENTS

You've got this! This guide will help you feel confident and prepared to advocate for your child.

6-8 Weeks Before the Meeting

Getting Your Child's Story Together

- Ask for copies of all your child's school records, evaluations, and test results (don't worry if there's a lot - we'll organize it!)
- Read through your child's current IEP with fresh eyes - what's helping them succeed? What's not working?
- Get a simple binder or folder and make sections for different types of documents
- Write down your child's school journey so far - the wins, the struggles, and everything in between

Becoming Your Child's Detective

- Start keeping notes about how your child is doing at home, during homework, and in the community
- Notice the good moments AND the challenging ones - both matter!
- If comfortable, take pictures or videos that show what you're talking about (like your child reading or struggling with tasks)
- Talk to grandparents, babysitters, or tutors who spend time with your child - they see things you might miss

Learning What's Possible

- Look up information about your child's specific needs and what kinds of help are available
- Research cool tools or technology that might make school easier for your child
- Think about what you'd love to see your child accomplish this year
- Learn about your rights as a parent - knowledge is power, and you have more rights than you might think!

IEP MEETING PREPARATION TIMELINE

FOR PARENTS

4-5 Weeks Before the Meeting

Starting the Conversation

- Touch base with whoever coordinates your child's IEP to confirm when and where you're meeting
- Let them know what topics are most important to you so they can plan accordingly
- Ask for any new reports or updates about your child's progress
- If you're bringing someone to support you (like an advocate or family member), give the school a heads up

Getting Expert Input

- Schedule visits with your child's doctor, therapist, or other specialists
- Ask them to write letters about what your child needs to succeed in school
- Consider whether you might want help from an educational advocate (they're like having a knowledgeable friend in your corner)
- Connect with other parents who've been through similar situations - they're goldmines of practical advice

Dreaming Big (But Realistic) Goals

- Start writing down what you hope your child will achieve this year
- Make sure goals are specific enough that everyone will know if your child is making progress
- Think about all areas: reading, math, making friends, managing feelings, getting around school
- Focus on what matters most right now - you can't fix everything at once, and that's okay

IEP MEETING PREPARATION Timeline

FOR PARENTS

2-3 Weeks Before the Meeting

Building Your Team at School

- Have a friendly chat with your child's teacher or the person who manages their IEP
- Ask if you can visit the classroom to see how things are going day-to-day
- Look at your child's recent work to understand where they're succeeding and where they need more help
- Address any worries or questions now, before you're in the formal meeting

Rallying Your Support System

- Decide who's coming with you to the meeting (having moral support makes a huge difference!)
- Fill in your support person on what's been happening and what you're hoping for
- Practice talking through your main points - it helps to say things out loud first
- Figure out who will speak about what during the meeting

Pulling It All Together

- Organize all your documents so you can find things quickly during the meeting
- Write a simple one-page summary of your child's strengths and challenges
- List the questions you definitely want answered
- Write down your thoughts to share with the team

IEP MEETING PREPARATION Timeline

FOR PARENTS

1 Week Before the Meeting

Getting Ready for Game Day

- Do a final check of all your materials and put them in order
- Make extra copies of important documents for the team (being helpful builds goodwill!)
- Write down your top priorities - what absolutely must be addressed?
- Handle the practical stuff: arrange childcare, take time off work, plan your route

Preparing Mentally

- Think through what you want to say and practice staying calm and focused
- Prepare for the possibility that not everyone will agree with you immediately
- Remember that most school staff genuinely want to help your child succeed
- Set realistic expectations - big changes might take more than one meeting

Final Details

- Double-check that everyone is still planning to attend
- Confirm the meeting location and time (set a phone reminder!)
- Send any final information to the team coordinator
- Get your note-taking materials ready

IEP MEETING PREPARATION TIMELINE

FOR PARENTS

Day of the Meeting

Before You Walk In

- Review your priorities one more time - keep your child's face in your mind
- Gather everything you need, including snacks and water for yourself
- Arrive a few minutes early to get settled and take some deep breaths
- Remember: you know your child better than anyone else in that room

During the Meeting - You've Got This!

- Bring a notebook and don't be shy about taking notes
- If something doesn't make sense, ask! These meetings can be full of education jargon
- It's totally okay to ask for a break if you need time to think or talk with your support person
- Keep bringing the conversation back to your child - their personality, their dreams, their daily reality
- Ask for clear explanations of any services or accommodations they're suggesting

Making Sure You Understand Everything

- Write down all the decisions that get made and who's responsible for what
- Ask for a copy of meeting notes or draft IEP before you leave
- Make sure you're clear on what happens next and when
- Find out when you'll get the final written IEP

IEP MEETING PREPARATION Timeline

FOR PARENTS

After the Meeting (Within 1 Week)

Wrapping Up Loose Ends

- Look over your notes while the meeting is still fresh in your mind
- Send a friendly email thanking everyone and summarizing what was decided
- File all your new documents where you can find them later
- Set up any follow-up meetings or evaluations that were discussed

Watching Progress Happen

- Make a simple calendar to track when new services or accommodations start
- Plan to check in regularly with your child's teacher about how things are going
- Keep noticing how the changes are affecting your child
- Start thinking ahead to the next IEP meeting (it comes faster than you think!)

IEP MEETING PREPARATION TIMELINE

FOR PARENTS

Your Success Toolkit

Remember These Truths

- **Your Child is Lucky to Have You:** You're showing up and fighting for them - that matters enormously
- **Teamwork Makes Dreams Work:** The best outcomes happen when parents and schools work together
- **Document Your Journey:** Keep records, but don't let paperwork overwhelm the bigger picture
- **You Have Rights:** You're not asking for favors - you're ensuring your child gets what they're legally entitled to
- **Organization is Your Friend:** A little system goes a long way in keeping you sane
- **You're Not Alone:** Other parents, advocates, and professionals are there to help
- **Every Step Forward Counts:** Progress isn't always dramatic, and that's perfectly fine

Trust Your Parent Instincts If...

- Team members seem like they don't really know your child
- You feel rushed to sign papers without time to read them carefully
- Your concerns are brushed off or your outside experts are dismissed
- Goals seem vague or don't match what your child actually needs help with
- You're told "we don't do that here" without a real explanation of why not

Final Reminders for Your Heart

You are absolutely the right person to advocate for your child. Nobody loves them like you do, nobody sees their potential like you do, and nobody will fight for them like you will. Some days the special education world can feel overwhelming, but remember - you're already doing something incredible just by preparing and showing up.

Trust yourself. Ask questions. Celebrate the victories, even the small ones. And know that every parent walking this path has felt exactly how you're feeling right now. You're braver than you think, stronger than you know, and your child is blessed to have you in their corner.

You've got this, and your child is going to thrive because of your love and advocacy.