

THERE IS A DIFFERENCE . . . and It's ok!

There is a difference between how we see one another, speak, think and act. It's called diversity. We can enrich our lives and most importantly the lives of our children when we embrace others and their journeys. I have learned a great deal from my son who is now 19 years old. He has no idea how incredible he is and how grateful the world is to have him. Challenges? Yep. Frustrations? Absolutely! Worth it – of course he's my son.

There is a difference between how students may be treated in school and how we educators view success. Parents be sure to keep educators on their toes. Your child is the greatest investment that you have.

1. Identification – Both over and under. Federal IDEA data shows two trends at once:
 - a. Over-identification:
 - i. Black students nationally are more likely to be identified under emotional disturbance and intellectual disability categories than white peers with similar behaviors in academics.
 - b. Under- identification:
 - i. English language learners for Latino students are more likely to have reading disabilities attributed only to English acquisition for years delaying dyslexia and speech evaluations.

What helps: Ask for assessments in *all areas* and in *native language* when appropriate of course data, not labels – “What specific assessment tool norm group was used? Was it validated by bilingual students? This question is required under 34 CFR 300304 (c)

2. Behavior vs. Disability Framing – The same behavior can be seen entirely different.
 - a. Child is defiant/disrespectful vs.
 - b. Child demonstrates difficulty with emotional regulation/executive functioning/sensory needs

The first leads to discipline and the second leads to FBA/BIP and support. Students of color, especially Black students receive more discipline than support according to the CDE.

What helps: If the behaviors impede learning, request a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and a Behavioral Intervention Plan – please provide Prior Written Notice (PWN) if refusing. It can also be an academic learning issue. ALWAYS check your child's comprehension levels. Understanding is everything whether in the classroom or on the playground.

3. Access to Information – Make sure that your procedural safeguards come in a language that you understand.
 - a. 24-48 hrs. prior to the IEP meeting, state in writing that you will be recording the meeting.
 - b. Meetings should be scheduled at date and time that is mutually agreed upon.
 - c. IEE's and ADR's are at public expense

What helps: Always put everything in writing. If you have a verbal exchange, always document what was said. Request a draft copy of the IEP (5) business day prior to the IEP. If you anticipate a difficult IEP, bring a friend, mentor or advocate.

4. Service Implementation vs. Service Offered – Always check the times that your child has received services vs. what the IEP says that she/he is supposed to received.

What helps: Weekly check-in check-out logs and monthly service logs. Request at IEP.

5. Cultural and Family Knowledge not Included – The IEPT requires to statements from a parent that addresses strengths and concerns about child. Family insight is vital!

NOTE: You must sign the first IEP in order to start services. After the first IEP, ever sign an IEP if you disagree. Only sign the parts that you agree with. Make sure that your comments are documented **verbatim**.