



Your Child's IEP and You

An Individualized Education Program (IEP) drives your child's educational instruction and ensures that they have equal access to the same educational opportunities as every other student.

As a member of the IEP team, you are your child's best advocate, making sure that the proper supports are in place to work toward learning goals that are meaningful and educationally appropriate.

It's not always easy, but there are steps you can take to ensure that your child's educational needs are being met in a way that reflects their individual strengths, needs and priorities for learning.

Get Organized

Documents, doctors reports, IEPs, and other papers will grow over the years, so be sure to keep them filed and organized so that you know right where to look for what you need, when you need it.

Document Changes

Keep a written record of the specific things you notice with your child that cause you concern—such as new

behaviors—and any solutions you might have that relate to your child's IEP.

Communicate in Writing

Poor communication and unclear expectations can create big issues down the road. Sending a letter of understanding after a meeting is one way to avoid these misunderstandings.

For day-to-day information sharing, some parents send a notebook to school, with notes and information that's helpful to school staff, such as something new that's happened at home. School staff can then send notes back as needed.

Get Help

If you've agreed to a program that's not having the results you'd hoped for, and the school district doesn't want to change its approach, it's a good idea to ask for outside help.

Parent-to-Parent and PAVE can connect you with parents and advocates in your area who can help:

Parent to Parent: 800-821-5927; arcwa.org/getsupport.

PAVE: 800-5-PARENT; wapave.org.

The Office of Education Ombuds provides conflict resolution: oeo.wa.gov.

“Think about your hopes and dreams for your child... Instead of maybe going in with 10 or 15 goals, really focus on two to three things that are really important to you. And remember, it's a relationship you're developing with the staff.”

Betsy M.

“What kids do at home is not always happening at school. Get the school to see what your child can do at home, things they can do and are interested in.”

Liz M.



Making the Most of the IEP Meeting

- ⊙ Send your ideas to the IEP team ahead of the meeting to help shape the discussion and draft the plan.
- ⊙ Use positive language. Focus on what will help your child work toward their goals.
- ⊙ Include the student as a meaningful participant in their IEP, life goal setting, career planning and decision-making.
- ⊙ Be sure to include work-related goals in your child's IEP. If it's not in writing, it won't happen.
- ⊙ Bring another family member, friend, or advocate to the IEP meeting.
- ⊙ Work at building a good relationship with all members of the IEP team.
- ⊙ Remember that this is a marathon, not a sprint. Keep your eyes on your and your child's long-term vision for the future.