



# SPECIAL EDUCATION TIPS FOR PARENTS FROM PARENTS



- \* Always ask questions when you don't understand the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process, an evaluation, the full range of programs available (such as full- or part-time Integrated Co-Teaching — ICT, full- or part-time Special Education Teacher Support Services — SETSS, special classes, etc.) or what a related service is (such as occupational therapy and speech therapy). You and the IEP team should discuss which combination of programs and services can help support your child. Also ask about resource organizations and parent councils, which can provide support and information to parents. **\*Note: the parent coordinator may not be the person to answer your questions, but he or she can direct you to the appropriate person.**
- \* The Department of Education (DOE) cannot implement special education programs and services for the first time without parental consent. After that, parental consent for special education programs and services is not required.
- \* Parent consent for evaluation is always needed. If a parent wants a reevaluation before the mandated evaluation in three years, he or she must request that in writing. However, for the three-year re-evaluation, a request for consent will be sent home. Parents **must respond** within 10 days. If the parent does not respond within that time, the IEP team can move forward. If the parent says they don't want a re-evaluation (within the 10 days) it will not happen. A parent can request (in writing to the school) that the district pay for an independent evaluation if he/she is not satisfied with the evaluation done by the school. The DOE may disagree with that request and the family will then need to go to a due process hearing to sort out the request.
- \* If your child is not receiving instruction or services in a general education setting for all or part of the school day, ask what opportunities there will be for your child to interact with her/his age appropriate and non-disabled peers.
- \* Find out if your child is offered the same academics as his or her non-disabled peers.
- \* Ask for a copy of all your child's evaluations, observations and progress reports. It's a good idea to review these before your IEP meeting.
- \* Keep a copy of your original IEP so you can compare it to subsequent ones to assess changes, etc.
- \* You have the right to an interpreter at the meeting. (Schools need three business days' notice). It should not be the parent coordinator unless you would like them to translate for you, and it should not be a sibling.
- \* The only thing you are required to sign at an IEP meeting is the attendance sheet. This DOES NOT mean that you agree with the IEP or everything that was said during the meeting, it just means you were present. If you disagree, you need to put that in writing and request it be written in the "parent concerns" section of the IEP.
- \* Take notes at the meeting to jog your memory for your review of the final document.
- \* If you don't agree with your child's IEP you **MUST** put that in writing to the IEP team and principal.
- \* You can request Mediation or an Impartial Hearing if you disagree with the DOE about your child's special education program, services, evaluations, classification, or eligibility for special education.
- \* Students may receive services in the least restrictive environment where their needs can be met. It may mean combinations of services and programs, or time in two different settings.
- \* Ask the teacher how many times your child is receiving services each week and if it's pull-out or push-in (compare it to the IEP to make sure that your child is receiving his/her mandated services). If he or she is not receiving the mandated services, talk with the school. If the issue is not resolved by the school, email the DOE at [specialeducation@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:specialeducation@schools.nyc.gov). The DOE may assign a DOE provider, contract with an



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outside agency or perhaps issue an RSA letter (Related Service Authorization) so you can find a therapist outside of school.

- \* Find out how to request a “parent member” (a trained parent of a student with a disability who can provide valuable information and support to families) to accompany you to an IEP meeting. You are also allowed to invite anyone else who has knowledge or special expertise regarding your child, such as a tutor, an outside therapist, etc. It’s always a good idea to have someone with you to take notes.
- \* Ask about interventions available such as Response to Intervention (RTI), Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and Academic Intervention Services (AIS) and whether they were provided for your child before he or she was evaluated for special education. (Remember, if you don’t know what those things are, ASK!)
- \* If your child just needs accommodations, ask about a Section 504 plan.
- \* If you don’t have access to a computer, ask where you can get copies of material/information needed.
- \* If your child is in an integrated co-teaching (ICT) class, make sure there is a general education and a special education teacher at all times for every subject indicated on the IEP.
- \* If your child has a 1:1 paraprofessional assigned to him or her, then that paraprofessional should be with your child and not pulled away for other school duties, or to work with other students.
- \* Ask that the paraprofessional receive training in working with your child’s particular disability.
- \* If your child has a full-time 1:1 paraprofessional for busing written on the IEP, and the paraprofessional does not transport your child to school but meets them at the bus at the school, notify the school that this is happening.
- \* If you have a busing issue, speak to the busing coordinator at your school and then call the Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT) at 1-718-392-8855. The DOE contracts with busing companies.
- \* Notify the school in writing if your child is a flight risk. Ask about the safety protocols at your child’s school and for a specific plan for your child. Discuss with the school staff what you find works best for your child.
- \* Find out information from the parent coordinator about deadlines for applying for school tours when your child is transitioning.
- \* If your elementary school child is transitioning to middle school, you must go through the middle school process even if you have a zoned school.
- \* Find out how you and your over 14-year-old child will participate in planning his/her transition to adult services. If he or she will be going to college, ask about the supports that will be available and how to access them. If your child will need additional training and/or will be looking for work, ask about how to register and receive services through Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCESS-VR).
- \* Find out what kind of ongoing communication you can expect from the school team working with your child. Find out what the school expects from you in terms of how you can best support your child.
- \* **BREATHE!**