



IEP Meeting Nuts & Bolts: What Parents Can Do to Get Ready

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), parents of a child who receives special education meet at least once a year with representatives of the local school district to prepare their child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) -- a detailed, written description of the child's educational program. Going to your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting with teachers and administrators can seem overwhelming. It is important to remember that, as a parent or guardian, you are an important part of this team. You know your child better than anyone else. School staff need to know what your child is like outside of the school setting. They also need to know your child's strengths and interests. Being prepared is a key to successfully developing an effective IEP for your child. Here are some ideas to help you organize and prepare information about your child.

Medical History

- ★ Has your child been diagnosed with any health problems? If so, explain them.
- ★ List current medications, what they are for, and how long your child has been taking them.

Developmental Milestones

At what age did your child:

- ★ sit alone
- ★ walk
- ★ speak single words
- ★ speak 2-3 word sentences

Attitudes and Relationships

How does your child get along with:

- ★ you
- ★ other adults
- ★ brothers/sisters
- ★ other children

Independent Living Skills

- ★ What self-help skills does your child have (toileting, grooming, etc.)?
- ★ What daily living skills does your child have (cooking, laundry, telling time, etc.)?

Positive Reinforcers

- ★ Does your child respond well to verbal praise?
- ★ What types of things does your child enjoy?

Observable Mood or Energy Patterns

- ★ Does your child's energy peak at a certain time of day?
- ★ Does your child's mood fluctuate?

Child's Learning Style

Does your child learn best by:

- ★ seeing
- ★ hearing
- ★ touching

Child's Strengths and Interests

- ★ What are your child's strengths?
- ★ What are your child's interests?

MORE IDEAS ...

- ★ Bring a photograph of your child to put on the table during your child's IEP meeting. This will remind everyone that you are discussing a person and not a collection of statistics.
- ★ Learn as much as you can about your child's disability and your child's rights. Bring copies of articles that will offer important information on the educational needs of children with your child's diagnosis or background; provide one copy for each member of the team.
- ★ Review copies of your child's evaluations before the meeting. Read them over and highlight anything that you are concerned with or have questions about. Meet with someone before the meeting to go over the reports and get your questions answered.
- ★ Write down questions you want to ask at the meeting and bring the list with you.
- ★ Write a list of your child's needs; be ready to discuss how these needs can be met.
- ★ Bring relevant paperwork such as things sent from the school, outside evaluations, and anything else pertaining to your child's schooling, such as work samples or tests.
- ★ Bring a tape recorder. Inform everyone that you will be taping the meeting. Use the tape as a resource in case you have any questions or concerns when you get home.
- ★ Have realistic goals and expectations for both your child and the school. Make a list of goals that you would like to see your child work toward. Make a list of services you would like included in the IEP.
- ★ Be informed. Know the special education laws for the State of Maine as well as your rights. A copy of the special education regulations can be obtained from any of the P³ partners listed below.
- ★ Bring someone with you to the meeting. They can participate or just listen and be supportive. As a courtesy, let the school know that someone will be coming with you.

Preparing information and thoughts ahead of time can provide new insights for parents and teachers, and will make the IEP meeting more productive. It is important that everyone understand what is being said during the meeting. Do not be embarrassed to ask others to explain anything you do not understand. Positive communication between parents and professionals is critical to the success of the special education process and your child's education.



P³ is a parent program partnership between the Learning Disabilities Association of Maine, Maine Parent Federation, and Southern Maine Parent Awareness.

For more information, please contact a P³ partner:

Learning Disabilities Association of Maine
Website: ldame.org
Phone: 1-877-208-4029



Maine Parent Federation
Website: mpf.org
Phone: 1-800-870-7746



Southern Maine Parent Awareness
Website: somepa.org
Phone: 1-800-564-9696

