

8 Things to Do Before Your Child's IEP Meeting

By Allison Lloyd, Parent Coach & Child Advocate

Walking into an IEP meeting can feel overwhelming, especially when you're tired, frustrated, or unsure of what to expect. As both a parent and advocate, these are the eight steps I always take to feel confident, prepared, and grounded before the meeting.

1. Read Through Your Child's Goals and Objectives

Start with the foundation. These goals are supposed to drive the IEP. Are they specific and measurable? Do they still make sense based on how your child is doing?

If not, make a note to ask for updated or more meaningful goals.

Parent tip: Ask, "What data is being used to track this goal, and how often is progress being reported?"

2. Review the Progress Data

If the school hasn't sent recent data, ask for it. Look at report cards, behavior logs, reading scores: anything that helps you understand how your child is really doing.

Parent Tip: Look for patterns, not just grades. Where is growth happening? Where has it stalled?

3. Know Your Child's Accommodations

Take a highlighter to the accommodation section. Make sure you know:

What supports are in place? If they're actually happening.

Whether they need to be changed.

Parent Tip: If something isn't working, now is the time to ask why.

4. Check in on Every Subject

Ask your child (and teachers if you can):

"How's reading going?" / "What's hard about math right now?"

"Is writing getting easier or more frustrating?"

Parent Tip: Walk into the meeting with your own data: real-world info from your child's experience.

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5. Find Out Who Will Be at the Meeting

Check your meeting notice or request a list of attendees in advance. This lets you prepare questions for specific people (like the OT or speech therapist) and reduces surprises.

Parent Tip: You have the right to know who will be sitting at the table.

6. Bring a Colored Pen

This might sound silly, but it's a game-changer. I sign the final version of the IEP in a colored pen so I can always tell which copy is the one I signed and not a draft. You will also be aware of anything they have you sign on the day of the meeting.

Parent Tip: Blue, purple, teal something that stands out.

7. Write a Parent Statement

This can be as simple as a few sentences or a bullet list. Share: What's working? What you're worried about? What you hope for your child?
Parent Tip: Having it written down helps you stay calm and focused, especially if emotions run high.

8. Don't Go Alone (If You Don't Want To)

You are allowed to bring a friend, family member, or advocate. You can also bring a notebook filled with reminders, calming affirmations, or questions.

Parent Tip: Support looks different for every parent but you do not have to do this alone.

You've got this.
Your child is lucky to have you in their corner.