

1. Number 1: Parent must demand sufficient time for the meeting. An annual IEP meeting should last a few hours (or an entire day). Do not appear by phone or waive your right to be in attendance. IEPs do not expire. The meeting must be set at a mutually convenient time and date (and place) and you should be given at least ten days notice. If you cannot attend the meeting on the date and time selected by the school, ask for a new date and time.
2. Number 2: The meeting should include everyone who has worked with the student in the previous year. Remember, IEP's are written prospectively and the team is trying to predict where the student can be in a year. In order to predict where the student is going, you have to know what the student has done in the past year. School staff members do not have to be present for the whole meeting, but the parents should be talking to everyone who is working with the student. Often the teachers and therapist have figured out what works and what does not work for the student. This information is not written down or put into an IEP and thus it is lost and each year the new set of teachers and therapists have to start from scratch. The information should be carried forward each year, and the IEP is the perfect place to capture what has worked and what has not worked for the student, what words have been learned, what interventions have been tried but failed and what intervention have worked. What is most productive is also discussing where the student has struggled - is it the subject matter or the personality of the instructor or how the material is presented or the time of day. An IEP can address these problems and help to resolve them or avoid them during the next year.
3. Number 3: Parents must demand data. Parents are entitled to be equal members of the IEP team. In order to be equal, the parents must have all the same information that the school has **prior** to walking into the meeting. Parents are entitled to this information before the meeting, not at or during the meeting. Data includes not only grades, but assessments and testing, both formal and informal, any observations, both formal and informal, therapy notes and logs, teacher notes and logs, progress on individual goals, lesson plans, and work samples, just to name a few. The list of possible data available to the school is extensive. Parents are entitled to any and everything that has the student's name on it, but they should focus on the data which could be used to assess the student's needs and deficits.
4. Number 4: Parents are entitled to a draft of the IEP before walking into a meeting.

5. Number 5: Parents can bring anyone they want to a meeting, including private therapists, tutors, advocates, attorneys or other supportive people. Parents however can also request that the district invite people to the meeting, including the student's paraprofessional or occupational therapist. (There is no rule that says paraprofessionals cannot attend IEP meetings.).
6. Number 6: The annual IEP should include a review of the goals and what the focus will be on for the up coming year. IEP goals should not be repeated from year to year. If the student is not making progress, then not only should the goal be revised but the level of support and how the information is being presented to the student should also be discussed and revised. If there is no progress, the IEP is not drafted correctly.
7. Number 7: The level of support and related services being provided should be reviewed and where the student is being educated should also be reviewed annually. Parents must ask the question - Is the student being educated in the least restrictive environment (LRE) – at least once a year.
8. Number 8: Parents must demand that the people working with the student receive training on the student's individual needs and how the student's disability manifests itself. Training for not only teachers, but the lunch lady and office staff can and should be included on the IEP in the section that asks what supports do the school staff need. School staff need training, always and ever year about this student.
9. Number 9: Parents must remember that demanding a comprehensive and meaningful IEP meeting once a year, is not asking for too much. It is not asking for more than you are entitled to. The school will not be doing you any favors. Do not be afraid to assert this right. Having an IEP is the only way to hold the school accountable for providing FAPE.
10. Number 10: Parents must not forget that they are warriors. You got this!!!