



The start of a new school year is typically a mixture of anxiety and excitement for most kids and their families. For kids with disabilities and their families, there is often greater reason for anxiety and more difficulty feeling the excitement, as concerns about how the child's program will be implemented loom large. Here are some tips for preparing for the start of school to increase the chances for success:

- 1) Review your child's IEP in early August (right now) to make sure it has all of the things that you remember being discussed in your last IEP meeting. If not, contact the case manager or special ed director right away to address any errors or omissions.
- 2) If there have been any problems over the summer, you should alert the new teacher or case manager (for less serious issues) or the principal, case manager, or special ed director, for something more serious, like that your child had a medical or psychiatric emergency over the summer. If the problem was serious and will impact your child at school, ask for an immediate meeting, preferably before school starts, to incorporate any needed changes.
- 3) If you have had any testing or clinical updates over the summer make sure to share those with the IEP team before school starts.
- 4) Make sure that all of the staff working with your child are aware that your child has an IEP and know what services and accommodations your child requires. Some parents find it helpful to prepare a one page summary of their child's needs, supports and accommodations to be shared with all team members as a way of introducing the child.
- 5) If your child has anxiety issues or difficulty finding their way around, set up a tour of the school and an opportunity to meet the teachers in the week before school starts. For



younger/middle school students one fun way to do this is to set up a treasure hunt within the school based on key locations they will need to find.



- 6) If your child requires significant use of assistive technology, check to be sure that the school has obtained the technology and that the staff that will be working with your child have received training on how to use it.

7) If your child has a low incidence (uncommon) disability or requires unusual equipment, offer to have an informal meeting with the staff to explain your child's needs and/or how to use the technology that they require.



8) If your child has had difficulty the prior year or has complicated issues at the moment, request an informal 30 day review or touch base meeting with the team to make sure things are going well.

9) If you have concerns about how it will go once school starts, request an observation for the classes/times of your child's day that are likely to be the most challenging to make sure that things are being handled appropriately.



10) Work hard to build and maintain relationships with the staff and to show your appreciation for their efforts. Pick your battles carefully. Staff can become defensive very quickly if they perceive a parent is micromanaging or becoming overly critical and will appreciate collaboration and positive feedback.



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