

MISTAKES TO AVOID AT SPECIAL EDUCATION MEETINGS and WHAT HELPS

1. **I haven't read your child's IEP.** This is a sure-fire way to make parent's feel that the school doesn't care about their child. If you are teaching the child, you should be familiar with the IEP. (high school and middle school teachers this applies to you).
2. Followed closely by **"I hardly know your child"** or **"I only have had your child for three weeks and they never speak in class."**
3. Any statements beginning with **ALL** Examples include **all children with autism are in Mrs. _____ classroom, all children must eat in the cafeteria, all children with reading difficulties are pulled out for Language Arts.** This is determined by the IEP team and is outlined in the document itself. This is an individual determination.
4. **Our school attorney told us we don't have to provide that service.**
5. **I will have to check with the special education director** (who is not present) to see if we can offer that as an IEP service.
6. **"Don't say I told you, but maybe you need an attorney.** " Be sure. It will be mentioned regardless of the don't say advisory.
7. **We don't do more than 60 minutes per week of _____ [and] _____ this service.**
8. **I don't offer that accommodation in my class.** Any accommodation that is specified in the IEP to be provided in a particular class must be made available by the teacher. Also, do not refer to all students, since this means you aren't individualizing the program.
9. **We only have an hour for this meeting. It is a busy time of the year.** The time allotted for an IEP meeting should be discussed and agreed upon in advance by parents and the IEP team.
10. Our team (without the parent) discussed the placement and IEP goals and this is what we think is appropriate.
11. **Do you have any suggestions for how you get your child to cooperate?**
12. **As the teacher, I use the one-to-one aide to collect data and to provide communication with parents. I work with your child when I can.** Services, data collection and communications are the responsibility of the teacher. In most cases, teachers should be providing the communications with the parents and should be determining the data to be collected by the aide and verifying the validity of the data that is collected.
13. **None of our ESY services extend beyond 4 weeks.** Like the word ALL, the word NONE should be avoided. Extended school year services cannot be limited to the availability of the summer session set up by the school district. The services including amount and type must be individualized.
14. **We never offer Wilson or intensive reading intervention until after the child is two grades behind. Don't worry, your child isn't that far behind.**
15. **Has anyone ever suggested that your child has autism? You might want to have them evaluated.** It is not the parent's responsibility to have the student evaluated and to supply

Micki Moran

November 1, 2023

necessary evaluations to the school district before the student receives services. It is the responsibility of the school to determine whether an evaluation is necessary and to gather that information.

16. **Beware the never-ending IEP meeting.** The endless meeting is ill-advised. Keep reasonable time frames around the meeting and have an agenda developed in advance. Two meetings are better than a marathon.
17. **Non-Verbal Communication** that often leads parents to call an attorney shortly after the meeting. Raise of eyebrows when the parent's private evaluator speaks. Writing notes and passing them to other staff.
18. **"My kid is doing great". Straight A's.** Personal conversations should be avoided.
19. **Is there something going on at home?** This question may have a place in the conversation but often parents feel blamed for what is going wrong at school.
20. **Stop responding to emails or calls from the parent.** This is almost certain to result in calls for legal intervention.

21. **Be prepared. Send parents documents in advance.**
22. **Offer to meet outside of an IEP meeting to discuss results of any evaluations prior to developing an IEP.** Parents may need to time to process the information. The IEP meeting is not a place for surprises on either side.
23. **Start with the positive.**
24. **Two meetings may be needed in complex cases.**
25. **Develop a proposed agenda. Circulate this in advance of the meeting. Ask the parent if they have items they wish to discuss.**
26. **Don't talk over anyone.**
27. **Develop a home to school communication system and agree on the level and frequency of communication.**
28. **Be honest and direct with the parents even though the message may be hard to hear.**
29. **Leave the meeting with a to do list with the following:**
 - a. **Follow up tasks?**
 - b. **Who will be responsible for those items?**
 - c. **When?**
 - d. **How will these things be communicated to the parent?**
 - e. **Will another meeting be necessary ?**
 - f. **If so, put it on the calendar or agree on a time frame.**
30. **Remember, being a teacher of special education students is very hard. Being a parent of this child is also very hard and is a 24/7 project and possibly a lifetime endeavor.**