

# THE ABBOTT LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE'S PARENT & STUDENT RIGHTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

## Understanding the IEP & Your Child's Educational Needs

"Empowering parents,  
students & educators"



### *Your Journey as a Parent of a Child with Special Needs has Begun...*

A written request (referral) for your child to be evaluated for special education services was submitted to the school district. Within twenty days the identification meeting was held and the decision was made to conduct an evaluation. Now, your child has been classified and the special education services identified. After many long meetings, the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) has been developed.

It is important for you to know your rights as a parent of a child receiving special education services, and to understand your child's IEP. The IEP is a legally binding document, and is only as strong as your ability to ensure it is enforced.

### **Special Education 101: Tips for Effective Parent Advocacy in Special Education**

1. **Participate in every meeting about your child.** Decisions about your child's educational needs are made at meetings. Never waive your right to attend and provide input. If the meeting date chosen doesn't work for you, select another. You are a member of the team.
2. **Know your rights.** You have a right to be an active participant in every part of the IEP process (**Identification, Evaluation, Classification, Development and Review of the IEP, Educational Placement, Re-evaluation, and Transitioning**). You also have the right to:
  - a. An Interpreter
  - b. Have documentation in your native language
  - c. To request an amendment to your child's IEP
  - d. To request an independent evaluation
  - e. To view all documentation/records related to your child
  - f. To request copies of your child's academic files
  - g. To file complaints and or Due Process
  - h. AT Devices/ Services in home



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3. **Know your Child and their Diagnosis.** You are the expert in your child and the way he or she learns best. Share what you know with their teachers and therapists. But continue to grow your knowledge by conducting your own research on best practices and learning styles. Understand all of the services and supports your child is receiving and also look into other options that may be available.
  
4. **Keep a record of your child's progress.** Videos, recordings, notes, assignments from home. And pictures can be very helpful in the IEP process. They can serve as proof in your advocacy for changes or modifications.
  
5. **Build a relationship with your child's principal, teachers and support team early.** Make your presence as a partner in your child's education known from day one. **Meet with their teachers and the school principal within the first month.** Introduce them to your child and to your family (you can even send a note that gives important information about your child's likes and dislikes and their learning style). Provide contact information. And when you meet with the Principal ask about all of the programs and opportunities available in the school. Lastly, request a monthly update. **You are the parent and you need to know how your child is progressing.**
  
5. **Stay knowledgeable about your child's educational plan and how they spend their school day.** Every minute of every day counts. Request a schedule and familiarize yourself with your child's school day. If your child is Special Needs and has an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) read it and make note of all of the supports your child is supposed to receive. Make sure those supports are there.
  
6. **Speak positivity and set high expectations for your children. Speak good words over your children.** Let them know that you **believe in them** and that you have **high expectations** for their life. Recognize their talents and encourage them in those areas. **Your voice builds their self-esteem.**
  
- 7.
  
8. **2. Make education important at home.** If you value education at home, your child will value education at school. **Make learning a priority and a part of everyday life.** Turn trips to the grocery store or to the mall into a learning activity. Set aside time for your child to complete their school work and always ask to see it.

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**7. Use Your Resources. If your child needs extra help, seek it out.** Your child's teacher is responsible for all of the children in the class. You are responsible for one. If your child is having trouble socially, emotionally or academically, there are many resources available in the city of Newark that are free and can help. **Call the Abbott Leadership Institute for information on different services and programs (973) 353-3560.**

**10. Attend an ALI Saturday Class.** There you will be able to learn about education advocacy, policy and strategies for parent leadership. You will also get to know other parents who have similar interests as you.



**The Mission of the Abbott Leadership Institute is to develop informed and effective education advocates for Newark Public Schools (NPS).**

Over the last 14 years, we have educated 4,500 people through our free Saturday classes at Rutgers Newark, mostly Newark residents.

All children deserve an excellent education, and it's our job to prepare parents, teachers and students to advocate for school reform that will meet their needs.

For the current class schedule, visit

[www.abbottleadership.org](http://www.abbottleadership.org).

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