

IEP MEETING

Quick Guide

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Sitting in an IEP meeting can feel like being in a foreign country where you don't speak the language. The acronyms, the jargon, the data points swirling around the table - it's overwhelming. And in the midst of it all, you're trying to advocate for your child while managing your own emotions and processing complex information.

I created this quick guide because I've been there - both as a speech-language pathologist and as a parent of a child with special needs. These are the exact phrases and strategies I use to turn potentially frustrating moments into productive conversations about your child's needs.

Use this guide before, during, and after your IEP meetings to:

- Navigate difficult conversations with confidence
- Ask the right questions at the right time
- Ensure your concerns are heard and addressed
- Create a paper trail that protects your child's rights

Ready to Go Beyond the Basics?

This guide gives you essential tools for handling your next IEP meeting. But if you're ready to become a true IEP expert and master every aspect of your child's special education journey, join us at Horizon IEP Academy.

In our comprehensive course, you'll learn:

- How to secure appropriate services and support
- Ways to ensure proper implementation of the IEP
- Strategies for building effective partnerships with your school team
- And much more that will transform your ability to advocate for your child

Visit www.horizoniepacademy.com to learn more about becoming the confident, knowledgeable advocate your child needs.

For now, keep this guide handy. It's your roadmap to more productive IEP meetings and better outcomes for your child.

WHAT THEY SAY	WHAT IT REALLY MEANS	WHAT YOU CAN SAY	WHAT TO DO NEXT
"We don't do that here"	They haven't considered alternatives to their standard approach	"Can you help me understand the policy behind that decision?"	Request written notice of any limitations or denials
"Your child is making progress" (but no data is shown)	They're relying on general impressions rather than data	"Could you show me the specific data that shows this progress?"	Ask for progress monitoring records and dates of measurements
"Let's wait and see how it goes"	They're delaying making changes your child might need now	"What specific data will we use to know if waiting is causing my child to fall behind?"	Set a specific date to review progress and reconvene
"All our students with this diagnosis get this program"	They're not individualizing based on your child's needs, and may have <i>predetermined</i> their placement (BIG NO NO)	"I appreciate that's worked for others, but how does this address my child's specific challenges with [X]?"	Request evidence of program effectiveness for your child's specific needs
"We don't have the resources for that"	They're making decisions based on resources rather than needs	"Let's first determine what my child needs, then discuss how to provide it."	Follow up in writing about your child's needs
"He just needs to try harder"	They're putting the responsibility on your child rather than examining supports	"I'm concerned there might be barriers preventing my child from showing their best work. Can we discuss what those might be?"	Document specific examples of your child's efforts and struggles
"She does fine in my class"	They may be missing subtle struggles or masking behaviors	"Could you tell me specifically what 'fine' looks like? What data are you using to measure success?"	Share examples of challenges you see at home
We've never done that before"	They're resistant to trying new approaches	"I understand this might be new, but could we discuss why it might be appropriate for my child?"	Bring research or expert recommendations supporting your request
"That's not how we usually handle this"	They're stuck in their standard procedures	"I appreciate that, but since every child is different, can we discuss what would work best for my child?"	Request written explanation of current procedures
"The general education teacher couldn't make it today"	They're proceeding without crucial team members	"Since their input is important for planning, could we reschedule when everyone can attend?"	Document missing team members and request complete team meeting

WHEN EMOTIONS RUN HIGH

SITUATION	STRATEGY	EXAMPLE RESPONSE	WHY IT WORKS
You feel frustrated	Pause and reframe	"Let me make sure I understand..."	Creates space for clarity
Team seems defensive	Focus on collaboration	"How can we work together to address this?"	Builds partnership
Meeting feels rushed	Slow things down	"I need time to process this information."	Maintains your rights
Feel pressured to decide	Stand firm politely	"I'll need to review this before making a decision."	Professional boundary setting
Team isn't listening	Document and redirect	"I've noticed we haven't addressed [concern]. Can we discuss that now?"	Keeps focus on priorities

WHEN YOU NEED TO...	SAY THIS	NOT THAT
Disagree	"I have a different perspective on this..."	"You're wrong about my child."
Request Data	"What specific measurements show..."	"Prove it!"
Express Concern	"I'm concerned about...because..."	"That won't work"
Buy Time	"I'll need time to review this and get back to you."	"I'm not signing this"
Redirect Discussion	"Let's focus on addressing specific need]"	"We're getting off track."

ACTION	PURPOSE	EXAMPLE
Email Summary	Document discussion	"Following up on our meeting where we discussed..."
Request Records	Gather evidence	"Please provide the data we discussed regarding..."
Set Timeline	Ensure accountability	"When can we expect to receive/review/implement..."
Document Concerns	Create paper trail	"I'm writing to express my concerns about..."

Remember:

- Stay calm and professional
- Focus on your child's needs
- Document everything
- Know your rights
- Request written notice of any denials
- Follow up in writing after meetings

Your Rights When Facing Pushback:

1. Request written notice of any denied services or supports
2. Ask for explanation of any decision in writing
3. Request data supporting team's positions
4. Call for additional meetings if needed
5. Seek outside evaluation if you disagree with school's assessment
6. Bring an advocate or expert to meetings
7. Record meetings (check local regulations first)

Quick Tip: If you feel overwhelmed during a meeting, you can always say, "I need a brief break" or "I'd like to continue this discussion at a follow-up meeting."

While this guide gives you essential tools for your next meeting, there's so much more to learn about navigating the special education system successfully. Visit horizoniepacademy.com to discover how to become the confident, informed advocate your child needs - not just for their next IEP meeting, but for their entire educational journey.