

Transcript — 10 tips for a better IEP meeting

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[Description: A person with short, cropped hair wearing a red blouse standing against an orange background.]

[On-screen text: Trynia, Understood Team

[Understood](#) logo]

Trynia: Hi, everyone. I'm Trynia from Understood.

IEP meetings can be challenging and emotional, but by following a few important tips you can help get the support your child needs in school.

In this video, we'll count down our top 10 tips for a better IEP meeting.

[On-screen text: 10 Tips for a Better IEP Meeting]

[0:15] Tip 10: Gather and review documents ahead of time

At number 10 we have: Gather and review documents ahead of time.

IEP meetings involve a lot of paperwork. The more information you have organized ahead of time, the more productive the meeting will be.

Before the meeting, gather copies of all official documents. This includes your child's IEP, as well as any recent progress reports and report cards.

[On-screen text: IEP; Progress reports; Report cards]

Ask the teacher for samples of your child's homework, tests, and student notes.

[On-screen text: Homework samples; Tests; Notes]

Also, be sure to ask the school for copies of any important reports.

As you look over the documents, ask yourself, "Where is my child

making progress? Or still struggling? What supports and services are helpful? Are there any new challenges?"

[0:52] Tip 9: Invite allies and supporters

Tip number 9: Invite allies and supporters.

It isn't easy to sit through a long meeting and talk about your child's struggles. If you need support, invite someone to join you. It's your legal right.

It could be a friend or a family member, a professional who works with your child, or an advocate.

[On-screen text: Friend; Family; Professional; Advocate]

Explain to them ahead of time how you think they can help. You might even ask to connect with them before the meeting to discuss your concerns, get their input, and plan your approach.

Once you decide who to bring, make sure you let the school know before the meeting date.

[1:23] Tip 8: Create a list of your questions and concerns

Tip number 8: Create a list of your questions and concerns.

After reviewing your child's records and getting input, you may have lots of things you want to discuss at the meeting. It can help to draft a simple list of the points you plan to make.

Boil it down to the basics: your concerns, questions, and suggestions.

[On-screen text: Concerns; Questions; Suggestions]

You can refer to this list during the meeting.

[1:44] Tip 7: Be clear on the goals for your child

Tip number 7: Be clear on the goals for your child.

For example, you may want your child to read at grade level, or be prepared for college. Make sure the IEP team understands your expectations.

During the meeting, the IEP team will decide on IEP goals that will guide your child's plan. These goals should align with your personal goals for your child.

Together, you and the team can figure out the best resources and instructional approaches. Be sure to ask questions about what the team proposes. You can even suggest changes yourself.

[2:16] Tip 6: Be open-minded and collaborative

Tip number 6: Be open-minded and collaborative.

Everyone on the IEP team brings something to the table. School staff can offer experience and understanding of your child's needs and strengths.

If someone brings up an issue or a solution that you're not sure about, hear them out. Sometimes issues come up in school that don't appear at home. School is a different environment with different rules and expectations.

By working with the IEP team and your child's teacher, you can better address all of your child's needs.

[2:45] Tip 5: Share your expertise

Tip number 5: Share your expertise.

No one on the IEP team knows your child the way you do. The other team members may be experts on education, but you're an expert on your child. So don't be afraid to speak up.

[On-screen text: Don't be afraid to speak up]

Share your perspective on your child's personality, strengths, interests, struggles, and successes. Describe how your child behaves when doing homework, playing sports, and doing other activities outside of school. This will give the team insights into your child, and ideas for how to provide the right type of support.

[3:16] Tip 4: Advocate for yourself and your child

Tip number 4: Advocate for yourself and your child.

Special education and IEPs can be complicated. Even if you're well prepared, you may hear new terms during an IEP meeting. When this happens, ask for an explanation.

[On-screen text: Ask for an explanation]

There are no dumb questions. It's your right to understand every detail and decision. If you're unsure about the IEP drafted in the meeting, don't feel pressured into agreeing to it.

[On-screen text: Don't feel pressured to agree to it]

You have the right to take the drafts home and think it over. After the meeting, be sure to stay in touch with the team. Following up on what the team said it would do is an important part of advocacy.

[3:51] Tip 3: Get your child involved

Tip number 3: Get your child involved.

At some point, you may want to have your child attend or even lead their own IEP meetings.

But even before then, it's important to get your child involved in the process. Before you go to an IEP meeting, ask your child what's going well in school and what isn't.

[On-screen text: “What’s going well in school?”]

You may be surprised at how insightful kids can be.

After the IEP meeting, make sure to tell your child what happened in an age-appropriate way.

[On-screen text: Tell your child what happened]

Talk about any new services or changes.

When kids get involved early, it helps them get ready to take responsibility for their own education someday.

[4:26] Tip 2: Focus on your child's strengths

Tip number 2: Focus on your child's strengths.

In IEP meetings, it's easy to get bogged down in all the areas where your child struggles. Make sure to spend some time in the meeting focusing on your child's strengths. It's as simple as asking the IEP team, "What is your child doing well in class? In what areas did your child score highly on any evaluations?"

[On-screen text: What is your child doing well in class?; In what areas did your child score highly?]

Think about ways you can harness those strengths to help your child make progress in school.

[4:52] Tip 1: Keep track of everything in one place

And the top tip for a better IEP meeting is: Keep track of everything in one place.

How can you keep track of the test results, report cards, official documents, and other paperwork related to your child's IEP? The best way to stay on top of it all is to keep everything in one place.

We suggest putting all important documents in an IEP binder. You can also use the binder to keep track of notes you've taken at IEP meetings, and concerns you've jotted down.

[Description: Overhead shot of hands opening a “Comm” tab of a binder. Additional tabs visible in the binder include: Eval; IEP; Report cards; Sample work; and Behavior. The first page of the Comm tab shows the names and contact information for different people. The right hand, holding a pen, scrolls over the list from top to bottom. The hand turns to the next page, which contains notes, and starts highlighting one of the sections.]

Need help with organization? Check out the description below for a link to a free IEP binder download that you can use.

[On-screen text: Free IEP Binder Download]

In the download, you'll get an IEP binder checklist, a school contact sheet, a communication log, and a goal tracker.

[**On-screen text:** Checklist; Contact sheet; Communication log; Goal tracker]

It's truly a game changer if you want a better IEP meeting.

Finally, let us know in the comments what you think is the most important tip for IEP meetings, and why. We'd love to hear from you!

[**On-screen text:** [Understood](#) logo. [Understood subscribe button](#).

Thumbnail of a video titled: “[What Is an IEP? Individualized Education Program explained](#)”]

Additional resources

- Get a free IEP binder download: [How to organize your child's IEP binder](#)
- [Navigating IEP meetings](#)
- [5 common misconceptions about IEPs](#)
- [My child's IEP doesn't seem to be working. Now what?](#)
- [Navigating IEP meetings](#)