

# Appropriate Planning for Academic Success

Presented By Shemica S. Allen of  
Personalized Learning Solutions, LLC



# About the Presenter

- Shemica S. Allen is the founder of Personalized Learning Solutions, LLC.
- Former educator with 15 years of teaching and administration experience working with students/individuals with disabilities and their parents/guardians.
- Received a Bachelor of Science in Education from the University of Arkansas in 1999 and a Master of Science in Kinesiology with a specialization in Adapted Physical Activity in 2005 from Texas Christian University.
- Certified to teach Special Education and Physical Education and also received her Principal certification in 2010.
- Experience as a Lead Case Manager/Response to Intervention Coordinator at a middle school in Crowley ISD, Special Education Team Lead at a high school in McKinney ISD, and Vocational Adjustment Coordinator in Garland ISD.
- Also has experience as a Life Skills Teacher, Content Mastery Teacher, Homebound Teacher, and In Home Trainer.
- Completed the Special Education Advocate Training (SEAT) in 2017 through the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA). Currently is a SEAT Teaching Assistant for upcoming SEAT classes for 2020-2021.
- Has extensive training in facilitating Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee meetings which requires effective communication, problem solving, decision making, and conflict resolution.
- Named to the Special Education Continuing Advisory Committee (SECAC) for Texas in December 2017 to help make decisions to improve Special Education in the state.

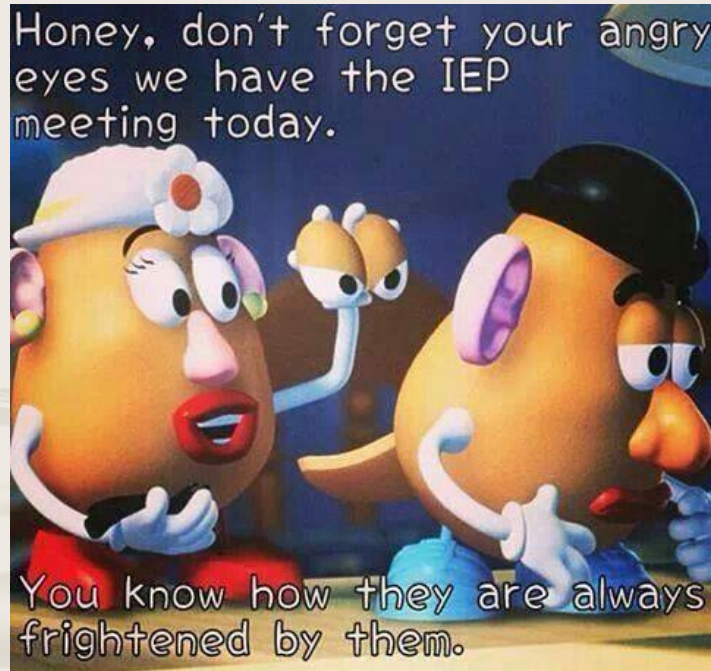
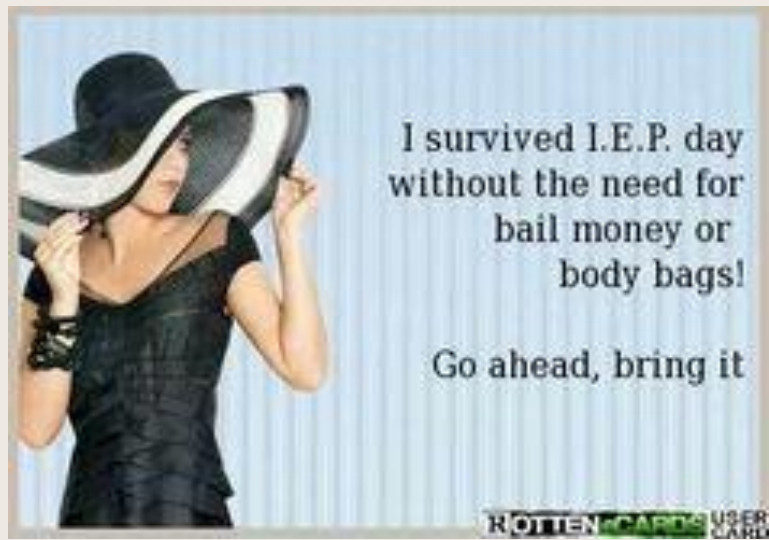
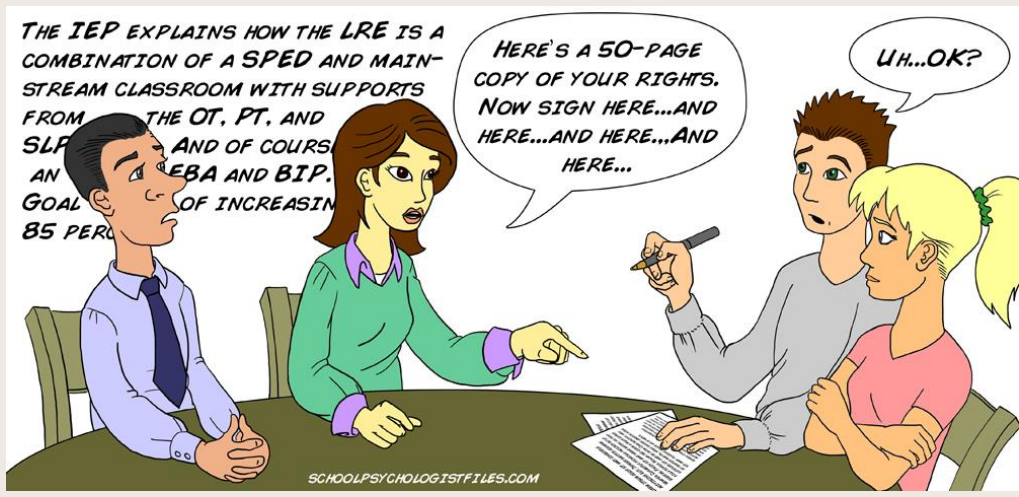


# *Presentation Objectives*

## Participants Will Learn:

- Participants will learn what actions to take and resources needed in order to properly prepare for their child's IEP/ARD meeting or 504 meeting.
- Participants will be given useful advice to help them appropriately plan and advocate before, during, and after the meeting.
- Participants will learn specific actions to take in regards to their child's IEP or 504 plan because of school closures & COVID-19.







# Federal Disability Laws *Still Apply* Even During A Pandemic!!

However, remember the U.S. Department of Education is allowing for some flexibility within these laws.

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

- Title II of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA)



# What Should You Be Doing

1. Stay in regular contact with:  
Case Manager  
Teacher(s)  
Rest of IEP or 504 Plan Team
2. Making an IEP & 504 Plan Binder
3. Setting up an email account just for communicating with school district personnel
4. Collecting Data



# IEP & 504 Plan Binder

1. Most recent IEP or 504 Plan
2. Most current FIE (Full Individual Evaluation) & evaluations from outside service providers
3. Copies of progress reports on IEP goals/objectives
4. Copies of student work samples
5. Any data collection sheets
6. Copy of your Vision Statement
7. Any distance learning plans, continuity plans, emergency plans, prior written notices, or IEP amendments as a result of school closures  
Ex: Special Education Emergency Contingency Plan
8. Parent Contact Log & copy of any important emails



**How many of you have had an experience at an IEP/ARD or 504 meeting where you barely spoke & participated? Maybe it seemed like school personnel was speaking at you instead of to you.**





# Virtual IEP/ARD & 504 Plan Meetings

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) does not stipulate IEP meetings have to take place in person. A parent may use alternative means of meeting participation, such as video conferences and conference calls.
- If your child's IEP meeting does not happen because of school closures or other COVID-19 response related issues then document this with an email to your child's school. School districts should also document in the student's folder all reasonable efforts made to follow meeting timelines.
- These same principles apply to 504 Plan meetings. Schools may choose to hold these meetings virtually or by conference call.



# Parent's Rights When It Comes To *Meaningful* IEP/ARD Meeting Participation

***Parental rights concerning participation is all outlined in different sections of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) & can be summarized as follows:***

- The right to receive notice. You must receive notice at least 5 school days before the meeting.
- The right to participate in all meetings concerning their child's education. Parents have the right to participate in meetings related to the evaluation, identification, and educational placement of their child.
- Parents have the right to participate in meetings related to the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to their child.
- The right to give consent for certain activities such as evaluations, changes in placement, and release of information to others. Parents are entitled to be members of any group that decides whether their child is a “child with a disability” and meets eligibility criteria for special education and related services.



# Parent's Rights When It Comes To *Meaningful* IEP/ARD Meeting Participation

*Parental rights concerning participation is all outlined in different sections of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) & can be summarized as follows:*

- Parents are entitled to be members of the team that develops, reviews, and revises the individualized education program (IEP) for their child.
- Equal partnership in the decision-making process. Parents are entitled to be members of any group that makes placement decisions for their child.

**IEP/ARD COMMITTEES CANNOT HAVE ANY TYPE MEETING CONCERNING A CHILD'S EDUCATION WITHOUT THE PARENTS BEING INVOLVED IN THE MEETING UNLESS THE PARENTS GIVE PERMISSION TO PROCEED IN THEIR ABSENCE.**




**What's the #1 mistake you think parents make in preparation for an IEP/ARD or 504 meeting?**



# Key Preparation Tips to Do Before an IEP/ARD or 504 Meeting

- Review your child's most current IEP, 504 Plan, and Full Individual Evaluation (FIE).
  - Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)
  - Measurable Annual Goals & Objectives
  - Schedule of Service (statement of special education and related services)
- Prepare a vision statement for your child to read at the meeting.
- Prioritize your child's needs. Keep the focus on the child & not the district's resources or your expectations.

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LEARNING SOLUTIONS**


**What Is A Vision Statement?**

DEVELOP A VISION STATEMENT  
TO PRESENT AT IEP MEETINGS

Is a prepared statement that highlights  
what you hope your child will be  
doing in the next 1 to 5 years.

- Think about short-term goals (current school year)
- Keep long-term goals in mind (school & career)
- Include strengths, interests, and concerns
- Focuses your child's IEP on results

-IEP should always keep future, long-term goals in mind







# Key Preparation Tips to Do Before an IEP/ARD or 504 Meeting

- Request a copy of the updated progress report-IEP goals & objectives are supposed to be updated & sent home at the same time as regular report cards. Before an annual IEP/ARD meeting ask for an updated progress report so you can review your child's progress on his or her IEP goals that has taken place over the course of the school year or years. Review which goals were mastered & not mastered. Non-mastered goals can be addressed in the new, proposed goals.
- Organize your child's IEP or 504 Plan documents-can be organized into a binder with tabs for quick reference. e.g. IEP, 504 plan, evaluations, progress reports, work samples, etc
- Prepare your recommendations, proposed accommodations, questions, etc.
- Gather all needed items the night before to take to the meeting-binder, notepad, pens, audio recorder, water, snack, etc
- Be prepared to listen actively.



**What's the biggest  
mistake you think parents  
make during an IEP/ARD  
or 504 meeting?**



# Key Actions to Take During an IEP/ARD or 504 Meeting

- Read your vision statement to the committee.
- Keep an open mind.
- Ask questions & seek clarifications if unsure about something.
- Focus on the outcome not the process.
- Make every attempt to sustain relationships-try to work with & get along with all IEP/ARD or 504 Plan committee members.
- Advocate for your child's rights respectfully-no name calling or yelling.
- Listen actively-especially to the items you do not want to hear about your child.



# Key Actions to Take During an IEP/ARD or 504 Meeting

- Work to design specific, measurable, realistic IEP goals-avoid generalized, unmeasurable goals. e.g.
  - Jack will be able to attend in the classroom while increasing time on task.
  - By the end of 36 instructional weeks, when given activities or assignments at his functional level, Jack will increase his time on task so that he is attending to a task for 15 minutes at a time with no more than 2 verbal reminders in 3 out of 5 opportunities as evidenced by observations and event data.
- Try not to get into a parental expectations vs. district resources battle.
- Know that you do not have to sign the IEP if you do not agree with it totally or if you want to take the time to review it. You can always sign later.

**TIP: If you are going to disagree with the IEP or 504 Plan do not sign your name & check disagree simply write DISAGREE instead.**



# Biggest Mistakes Parents Make During an IEP/ARD or 504 Meeting

- Believing the professionals are the only experts-parents are experts on their child.
- Not making requests in writing-any requests for evaluations, related services, etc must be put in writing. Written requests initiate timelines that the school district must follow in response to your request. This will also create a paper trail.
  - For example, when a parent requests a special education evaluation in writing that triggers the 15-45-30 day timeline. The school has 15 school days to answer the request concerning the evaluation, 45 school days to complete the evaluation, and 30 calendar days to have the ARD meeting.





# Biggest Mistakes Parents Make During an IEP/ARD or 504 Meeting

- Not being familiar with Prior Written Notice of the Procedural Safeguards. Whenever parents make a request for their child in the IEP/ARD meeting, the IEP/ARD committee is required under Prior Written Notice to provide the parents with written notice within a reasonable period of time. The notice must include the following:
  - A description of the action proposed or refused.
  - An explanation of why the agency proposes or refuses to take the action;
  - A description of any other options that the agency considered and the reasons why those options were rejected;
  - A description of each evaluation procedure, test, record, or report the agency used as a basis for the proposed or refused action;
  - A description of any other factor that is relevant to the agency' proposal or refusal.



# Biggest Mistakes Parents Make During an IEP/ARD or 504 Meeting

- Allowing the evaluation to be presented for the first time at the ARD meeting-request copy before meeting so allow time to review.
- Accepting goals and objectives that are not measurable-Measurable goals and objectives are imperative for your child's IEP. Without measurable goals and objectives, it is difficult to determine if your child has made any progress.
- Allowing placement decisions to be made before IEP goals and objectives are written-Many times after assessment has been discussed & reviewed, the IEP/ARD committee will determine the child's placement. Goals and objectives are always written before placement is discussed.



# Biggest Mistakes Parents Make During an IEP/ARD or 504 Meeting

- Requesting a related service instead of an assessment that supports the need for a related service-Many times parents will request services such as speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy, etc. in the IEP/ARD meeting. Frequently the IEP/ARD committee will respond by stating that the student does not need the service. Instead of requesting the related service request the assessment that supports the need for the related service.
- Accepting assessment results that do not recommend the services you think your child needs-can request an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) in writing.
- Allowing your child's IEP meeting to be rushed so that the school staff can begin the next child's IEP/ARD meeting.
- Not asking questions.



**What's the most important item or task parents fail to do after an IEP/ARD or 504 meeting?**



# *Read the Prior Written Notice*

## **What is a Prior Written Notice?**

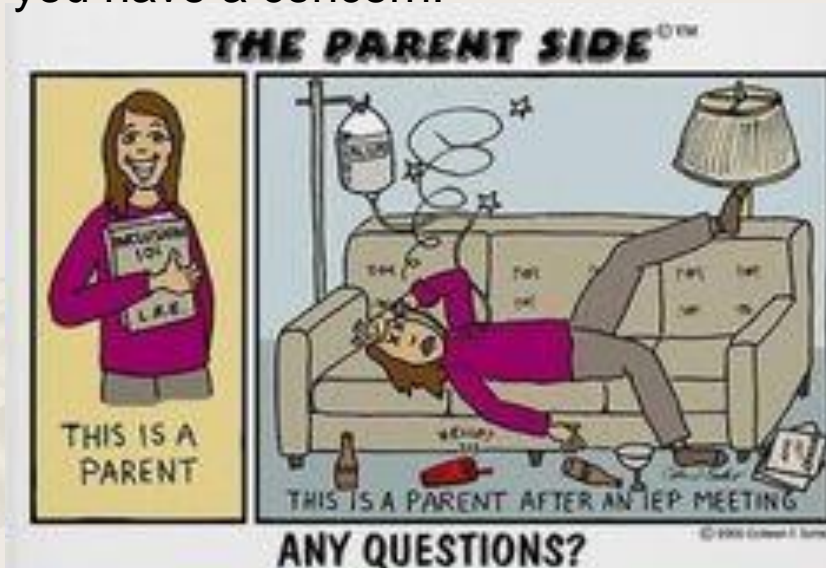
- Used by school districts to inform parents in a concise format its intention to propose or refuse an action or actions related to your child's IEP.
- Normally see a PWN at the conclusion of an IEP meeting.
- School is required to give parents this notice with a minimum of a 5 school days waiting period before any changes are to be implemented unless you agree to waive the requirement of 5 school days.
- School districts may have sent home PWNs detailing changes to your child's IEP as a result of the COVID-19 school closures.





# Important Tasks to Do After an IEP/ARD or 504 Meeting

- Update your IEP/504 Plan binder with copy of new IEP, 504 Plan, FIE, etc.
- Check in with teachers via parent conference, weekly emails, etc.
- Contact the Special Education department head/team lead or 504 Coordinator if the IEP or 504 Plan is not been honored or implemented as agreed upon.
- Read & file away all progress reports. Remember progress reports are updated & sent home each time report cards are issued. If you do not receive a progress report then request one.
- Check assignments, tests scores, etc to see if accommodations are being given to your child as directed in IEP or 504 Plan.
- Request an IEP or 504 meeting if needed-do not wait until the next annual meeting if you have a concern.



# Items to Consider as a Result of School Closures & COVID-19



# Initial Evaluations & Reevaluations

- School districts should make a good faith effort to complete relevant components of the evaluation, to the extent practicable, given limitations on face-to-face components of an evaluation.
  - Some companies who produce testing protocols have given permission for those protocols to be completed virtually but it is still up to each school district on virtual evaluation procedures.  
i.e. cognitive & achievement testing
- For example, in most cases a review of existing evaluation data (REED) process could be initiated to determine what, if any, additional data is needed to make an eligibility determination & provide needed services.
- School districts should communicate with parents to discuss any components that have been identified for completion remotely that require parent participation.  
i.e. parent interviews, rating scales, etc.



# Initial Evaluations & Reevaluations

- School districts should contact parents in order to:
  - Communicate that completion of the evaluation must be delayed until normal school operations resume.
  - Develop a plan with the parents that reflects completing the FIE as soon as possible.
  - Determine any interventions and supports that will be provided in the interim.
  - Document communication with parents regarding the plan for FIE completion when normal operations resume.
- You will want to review your school district's 504 policies to determine 504 plan review and reevaluation timelines, as there is no requirement in federal law for how often must occur.



# Compensatory Services

- <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/covid/covid19-comp-services-two-pages.pdf>
- IEP/ARD committees will need to make individualized decisions regarding the provision of compensatory services once schools reopen.
- The IEP/ARD committee should review with the family what special education and related services listed in the IEP were temporarily reduced or suspended due to school closure & COVID-19. Service logs and temporary schedules should be compared with the IEP to document what services the student missed.





# Compensatory Services

- When determining whether a student needs compensatory services, the student's IEP/ARD committee must review the student's past and current needs considering the absence of special education and related services resulting from school closures.
- The IEP/ARD committee should discuss and weigh information from a variety of sources. For example, compare the statement of the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance in the current IEP with the most recent measures and observations from progress reports and data collection.
  - Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)
  - Progress reports on measurable annual goals & objectives
  - Teacher & parent observations during distance/virtual learning
  - Work Samples



# Data Collection

- Proper data collection & tracking of your child's progress (academic, behavior, functional) is an integral part of future IEPs and 504 Plans.
- May record a video of your child during the time she or he is completing school work to provide data on his or her ability to stay on task or to demonstrate competency for a particular objective or goal.
- Put together a portfolio, video, or audio file to demonstrate competence on a particular goal, such as reading comprehension.
- Can provide sample data collection sheets to track progress on IEP goals/objectives, behavior, etc.



# Tools & Resources Available

- <https://tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/health-safety-discipline/covid/covid-19-support-special-education-0>
  - What is a Vision Statement
    - Parent Input Form
  - Special Education Acronyms
    - IEP at Glance Template
    - Data Collection Sheets

## **Contact Information**

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