

Communicating During your Child's Admission Review & Dismissal (ARD) Meeting

Have you ever been in an ARD meeting where something was said to you that kind of hurt your feelings? Have you ever said something that hurt someone else's feelings? Many times, negative statements are not intended to hurt someone's feelings, but they do.

We will practice the skill of reframing a negative statement into a positive statement.

Key points to reframing negative statements into positive statements:

- If something is said to you during your child's ARD that is an *Owie*, take a moment and pause before you react.
- Identify the good intention and use it to reframe the negative statement.
- End the reframe with a question "is that what you mean?" "Correct?"

Examples:

Administrator says to a parent during the ARD: "Why do you always think the school is out to get you?"

Good Intention: school is here to help

Parent reframes: "So, it's important to you that I listen with an open mind, is that what you mean?"

Teacher says to a parent during the ARD: "Your problem is that you always put the blame on someone else."

Good Intention: want the student to do well

Parent reframes: "It is important to you that I help my child as best I can, is that what you mean?"

Teacher says to a parent during the ARD: "Let me finish, I'm trying to tell you what your son did."

Good Intention: sharing information about the student

Parent reframes: "It's important that I listen, is that what you mean?"

Notes:

Common Mistakes Parents Make During the ARD Meeting

1. Believing the professionals are the only experts.

It can be very intimidating to sit at a table with several educators and professionals. Professionals/Educators do bring a great deal of knowledge and experience to the table. Although most parents do not have a background or degree in education, they have a great deal of knowledge and experience regarding their child. Parents provide historical information and the big picture from year to year. They know what does and does not work with their child and can be a great asset to the ARD Committee.

2. Requesting a related service instead of an assessment that supports the need for a related service.

At times parents will request services such as speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy, etc. in the ARD meeting. We recommend that parents do not request the service but request the assessment that supports the need for the related service. Only a certified or licensed professional is qualified to determine if a child needs or does not need a particular related service.

3. Not making requests in writing.

Any request a parent makes needs to be in writing. Written requests are important because they initiate timelines that the school district must follow in response to your request. This will also create a paper trail. When you have a discussion by phone with school staff, write a letter or email that briefly outlines what you talked about. Documenting your conversations helps prevent miscommunication.

4. Allowing the assessment information to be presented for the first time at the ARD meeting.

Parents are entitled to have the assessment information explained to them before the ARD meeting. We encourage parents to have the person who administered the assessment give them a copy of the report and meet with them to explain the report several days before the meeting. This enables the parents to think through the information before making decisions for their child. If all decisions are based on the information from the assessment, it only makes sense for the parents to be knowledgeable and informed about the assessment results in a way they can understand.

5. Allowing placement decisions to be made before IEP goals and objectives are written.

Many times, after assessment is discussed, the ARD committee will determine the child's placement. Goals and objectives are always written before placement is discussed. To ensure that the child is placed in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), the ARD committee must determine: Which of these goals and objectives can best be met in the general classroom? This line of inquiry continues until all placement options have been decided upon for all the goals and objectives. The committee must always start with the LRE and then work toward a more restrictive environment only as necessary. IDEA is very clear that the committee must always consider the general education classroom as the first option for students with disabilities.

6. Not asking a lot of questions.

It is very important to ask questions and lots of them. Educators use many terms and acronyms specific to special education. Parents may become confused when these terms are used during the IEP meeting. This can add to the frustration that a parent may already be feeling. It is important to ask what the terms or acronyms mean. Informed decisions cannot be made when parents do not understand what is being discussed.