

Before, During, and After the School Meeting

A prep checklist for IEP and other school meetings. You are an equal member of this team — the word “parent” is on the attendance list for a reason. These are general concepts under federal special-education law (IDEA); details and timelines vary by state and district.

■ Before — ask for things in writing

- ☐ Confirm the meeting date, time, and purpose by email
- ☐ Ask who will attend from the school, by name and role
- ☐ Ask for copies of any evaluations or reports the team will discuss — in advance
“Could you send me anything the team will be reviewing, so I have time to read it first?”
- ☐ Ask whether a draft plan exists, and to see it ahead of the meeting
- ☐ Tell them who you’re bringing
You can bring a spouse, a friend, an advocate, or one of your child’s outside therapists.

■ Before — what to bring

- ☐ Your own one-page list: top 3 priorities for your child this year
- ☐ Recent reports from outside therapists (ABA, speech, OT), if your child has them
- ☐ Work samples, notes, or short videos that show what you see at home
- ☐ A photo of your child to set on the table
It sounds small. It keeps a paperwork meeting about a person.
- ☐ A notebook — and this checklist
- ☐ Questions you already know you want answered, written down

■ During — questions worth asking

- ☐ “Can you explain that in plain language?”
Jargon is nobody's first language. Asking is not a weakness.
- ☐ “How will we measure that goal, and how often will we hear about progress?”
- ☐ “What does that support look like in my child's actual day?”
- ☐ “Who is responsible for this, and by when?”
- ☐ “Can we add that to the plan in writing?”
If it matters, it belongs in the document — not in the hallway afterward.

■ During — phrases that protect you

- ☐ “I need a minute to read this before we discuss it.”
- ☐ “Please note my disagreement in the minutes.”
Calm, polite, and on the record. You can disagree without a fight.
- ☐ “I'm not ready to sign today — I'd like to take this home and review it.”
Taking documents home to review is a normal thing to do.
- ☐ Share strengths, not just struggles — you know this child best
- ☐ Take notes: who said what, what was decided, and the dates attached

■ After — put it in writing

- ☐ Send a short, friendly follow-up email summarizing what you understood was decided
“Thanks for meeting today. Here's what I understood we agreed to — please correct me if I have anything wrong.” This creates a written record, kindly.
- ☐ Ask when you'll receive the final documents, and check them against your notes
- ☐ Put every follow-up date and review timeline on your calendar
- ☐ If you disagreed with something, put that disagreement in writing too
- ☐ Sign releases so the school and your child's outside therapists can talk to each other
- ☐ Jot down what worked and what you'd raise next time — there is always a next meeting