



Do the services on your child's IEP meet your child's unique needs?¹

*Is your child struggling in school and you don't know why?
Are you concerned because your child is not making progress?
Do you worry the IEP is not built on your child's strengths?*

You are the expert on your child and an important member of your child's IEP team. Your input makes a difference in developing an IEP with appropriate supports and services to help your child make meaningful progress. Sometimes, it feels overwhelming. Here are tips and tools you can use to turn your questions and concerns into action. Your participation on your child's IEP team matters. Use these resources to find your voice and advocate effectively for your child.

Review the Records

To find any missing connections between your child's unique needs and the services and supports they're getting now, start with your child's school records. The school district keeps data on your child's educational needs in two important documents:

1. The most recent comprehensive Evaluation Report
 - The IEP team is required to conduct a comprehensive reevaluation of your child's educational needs at least once every 3 years. If you can't locate your copy of the most recent Evaluation Report, request one from the IEP Case Manager.
2. The section of the IEP titled "Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance."
 - IEP forms vary from school district to school district. Some IEP forms include a summary of your child's Present Levels in all areas of educational need in the first couple pages. Other IEP forms break it down and introduce each Annual goal with the Present Levels for your child in one specific area of educational need.

Use the blank Records Review Chart in the resource box below to list your child's unique needs.

NOTE: For additional guidance, a completed sample is provided.

Use the information you find in your child's Evaluation report and the Present Levels of your child's IEP to make your list. This list goes in the column on the left.

Example:

¹ This entire resource is from the PACER Center website. www.pacer.org/parent/iep/iep_services_check

Needs: Speech, Language, Communication	Services/Supports on the IEP: Speech, Language, Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pragmatic language for social communication is extremely discrepant from same-age peers (Eval, p. 7) • Typically talks to peers about a very narrow range of topics of interest (IEP, p.3) • Uses scripts from favorite movies or books frequently in conversation (IEP, p. 3) • Misses sarcasm & non-verbal cues from peers in social situations (IEP, p. 3) 	

List specific services and supports in the current IEP that meet your child’s unique needs.

This list goes in the column on the right. You’ll find different kinds of services and supports in various sections of the IEP, such as:

- Special education & related services
- Supplementary aids & services
- Accommodations
- Assistive technology
- Transportation
- Positive behavior support plan
- Transition services

Example:

Needs: Speech, Language, Communication	Services/Supports on the IEP: Speech, Language, Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pragmatic language for social communication is extremely discrepant from same-age peers (Eval, p. 7) • Typically talks to peers about a very narrow range of topics of interest (IEP, p.3) • Uses scripts from favorite movies or books frequently in conversation (IEP, p. 3) • Misses sarcasm & non-verbal cues from peers in social situations (IEP, p. 3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct services from the Speech/Language Pathologist, 30-minute session, 1 session per month • Direct services from the school Social Worker, 30-minute group social skills session, 1 session per week

See the [Blank Records Review Chart](#) at the end of this document.

For each of your child's educational needs listed in the left column, you should find services and supports on the IEP to list in the right column. If not, this is a problem you can resolve at an IEP team meeting.

The IEP services and supports you listed in the right column should appropriately meet your child's educational needs listed in the left column. If not, this is also a problem you can resolve at an IEP team meeting.

Get the IEP Team Together

Request an IEP team meeting to make your voice heard and work collaboratively with school district staff to develop the services and supports your child needs.

Focus the agenda for your IEP team meeting on your priority concerns.

One of the most effective ways to make your voice heard is to share your priority concerns with your child's IEP Case Manager before the IEP team meeting.

- Communicate your priority concerns in writing at least 1 day before the IEP team meeting.
- Request that your priority concerns are added to the IEP team meeting agenda.

To help you identify your priority concerns, think about these questions:

- What questions do you have about what's written in your child's Evaluation report and in the current IEP?
 - There is a lot of special education lingo in these documents. If you don't understand something, ask.
- Do you agree the school district Evaluation report and the Present Levels on the current IEP provide a complete picture of your child's educational needs?
 - If not, what needs do you see in your child that are not documented?
- Do you agree the school district Evaluation report and the Present Levels on the current IEP provide an accurate picture of your child's educational needs?
 - If not, how do you see your child differently?
- Do you have any new information about your child's disability that you want the IEP team to know?
- Do you think the IEP team should consider additional testing to collect data on your child's educational needs in any specific area?
- What questions do you have for the IEP team about your child's educational needs or progress in school?
- Do you agree the current IEP meets your child's educational needs?
 - If not, which of your child's specific educational needs stand out to you because you can't find any (or enough) services and supports on the current IEP to help your child with those needs?
- Are you concerned about any supports and services on the current IEP that are not working to help your child make meaningful progress?

- Are you concerned that the current IEP is not shaped by your child’s strengths, interests, and preferences?
- When you think about the future, what are your dreams for your child?
- What specific skills, strategies, knowledge, and behaviors do you want your child to learn this year?

Advocate

Participate with confidence at your child’s IEP team meeting.

- You’ve identified what concerns you the most about your child’s unique needs and struggles in school.
- You’ve identified what concerns you the most about the services and supports your child is receiving (or not receiving) on the current IEP.
- You’ve communicated your priority concerns in writing to your child’s IEP Case Manager and they’re on the agenda for the meeting.

Find a strategy that works for you to keep track of the discussion and decisions made at your IEP team meeting.

Discussion moves quickly at IEP team meetings and it can go in many different directions – sometimes far from the agenda.

To feel confident that all your priority concerns are heard and discussed at your IEP team meeting and that you have a clear understanding of the agreements you reach with the school district and next steps, try these different strategies and stick with the one that is most comfortable to you:

- Bring someone with you to take notes. This person could be a friend or family member, an outside provider of services to your child (such as a County Case Manager), or a PACER Parent Leader.
- Ask a school district staff person on the IEP team to take notes throughout the meeting and provide copies of the notes to all participants after the meeting.
- Use the blank IEP Meeting Checklist in the resource box below. NOTE: For additional guidance, a completed sample is provided.

See [Blank IEP Meeting Checklist](#) at the end of this document.

The greatest resource you have as a parent advocating for the educational rights of your child is the special education process itself. The tips and tools on this page are designed to help you:

- Turn questions and concerns about your child’s struggles in school into action
- Use your role as a member of the IEP team to turn your input into positive outcomes for your child

You are the expert on your child and your voice on the IEP team makes a difference.

From Input to Outcomes: IEP Meeting Checklist

Date of IEP Team Meeting: _____		
My Questions and Priority Concerns:	Discussed: ✓	New Information/IEP Team Decisions:
1)		
2)		
3)		
4)		
5)		
6)		
7)		
8)		
9)		
10)		

[How to use this checklist to prepare for your child's IEP meeting](#)

From Unique Needs to Individualized Services on Your Child's IEP: Records Review

[How to use this chart to review your child's special education records](#)

NEEDS: Intellectual functioning (cognitive impairment, needs related to processing speed or working memory)	SERVICES/SUPPORTS on the IEP: Intellectual functioning
•	•
•	•
•	•
NEEDS: Academic performance, reading	SERVICES/SUPPORTS on the IEP: Academic performance, reading
•	•
•	•
•	•
NEEDS: Academic performance, math	SERVICES/SUPPORTS on the IEP: Academic performance, math
•	•
•	•
•	•
NEEDS: Academic performance, writing	SERVICES/SUPPORTS on the IEP: Academic performance, writing
•	•
•	•
•	•
NEEDS: Executive functioning (difficulty with organization, planning & prioritizing, task initiation & completion)	SERVICES/SUPPORTS on the IEP: Executive functioning
•	•
•	•
•	•
NEEDS: Speech, language, communication	SERVICES/SUPPORTS on the IEP: Speech, language, communication
•	•
•	•
•	•

NEEDS: Health	SERVICES/SUPPORTS on the IEP: Health
• • •	• • •
NEEDS: sensory needs related to Vision and/or Hearing impairment	SERVICES/SUPPORTS on the IEP: Vision and/or Hearing impairment
• • •	• • •
NEEDS: Gross motor (large muscle movements such as difficulty climbing stairs, catching a ball, pedaling a bike, etc.)	SERVICES/SUPPORTS on the IEP: Gross motor
• • •	• • •
NEEDS: Fine motor (small muscle movements such as difficulty cutting with scissors, holding a pencil to write, zipping a jacket, etc.)	SERVICES/SUPPORTS on the IEP: Fine motor
• • •	• • •
NEEDS: Sensory regulation (when your child has a significantly higher or lower tolerance for specific sensory experiences/environments)	SERVICES/SUPPORTS on the IEP: Sensory regulation
• • •	• • •
NEEDS: Social, emotional, behavioral	SERVICES/SUPPORTS on the IEP: Social, emotional, behavioral
• • •	• • •
NEEDS: Activities of Daily Living (difficulty eating, dressing, toileting, transferring from a chair to standing, etc.)	SERVICES/SUPPORTS on the IEP: Activities of Daily Living
• • •	• • •

NEEDS: Assistive Technology	SERVICES/SUPPORTS on the IEP: Assistive Technology
• • •	• • •
NEEDS: Transition to Postsecondary education & training	SERVICES/SUPPORTS on the IEP: Postsecondary education & training
• • •	• • •
NEEDS: Transition to Employment	SERVICES/SUPPORTS on the IEP: Employment
• • •	• • •
NEEDS: Transition to Independent living	SERVICES/SUPPORTS on the IEP: Independent living
• • •	• • •

It's also important to review the documentation of your child's strengths, interests, and preferences in the school district Evaluation Report and in the Present Levels of your child's current IEP.

STRENGTHS, INTERESTS, & PREFERENCES	SERVICES/SUPPORTS on the IEP are shaped by my child's strengths, interests, and preferences in the following ways:
• • •	• • •

[How to use this chart to review your child's special education records](#)