



LIBERATED HANDS PARENT TOOLKIT

5 THINGS EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION

A Parent's Quick Guide to Understanding the Process

**Created by Rochelle Armstrong, MSHIM
Founder | Liberated Hands LLC
Navigating Special Education Together**

718-600-3342

www.liberatedhands.com

support@liberatedhands.com

Part of the Liberated Hands Parent Toolkit Series

WELCOME



Beginning your special education journey can feel overwhelming, but you don't have to navigate it alone.

Understanding a few key principles can make a tremendous difference in how you advocate for your child. This guide highlights five important things every parent should know before attending meetings, reviewing documents, or making educational decisions.

Remember—you are an essential part of your child's educational team.

1. YOU ARE AN EQUAL MEMBER OF THE IEP TEAM



Your voice matters.

Schools bring educational expertise, but you bring something equally important: knowledge of your child.

Share:

- Your concerns
- Your child's strengths
- What works at home
- Your goals for your child's future

Parent Reminder

You have the right to ask questions, request clarification, and actively participate in every decision regarding your child's education.

2. ASK QUESTIONS UNTIL YOU UNDERSTAND



Special education includes many unfamiliar terms and acronyms.

Never feel pressured to agree to something you don't fully understand.

Examples include:

- IEP
- 504 Plan
- FAPE
- LRE
- Related Services
- Present Levels
- Annual Goals

Parent Tip

There are no "bad" questions. Asking questions helps you make informed decisions for your child.

3. EVERYTHING SHOULD BE INDIVIDUALIZED



No two children are exactly alike.

A child's IEP should reflect their unique strengths, challenges, and educational needs—not simply mirror another student's plan.

An individualized program may include:

- Specialized instruction
- Speech therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Counseling
- Behavioral supports
- Classroom accommodations

Remember

The goal is to provide the supports your child needs to make meaningful educational progress.

4. KEEP GOOD RECORDS



One of the most valuable things you can do is stay organized.

Consider keeping copies of:

- ✓ Evaluations
- ✓ Progress reports
- ✓ IEPs
- ✓ Emails
- ✓ Meeting notes
- ✓ Report cards
- ✓ Medical records (if applicable)

Having organized records makes future meetings much easier and helps you track your child's progress over time.

5. YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS ALONE



Many parents feel overwhelmed at first.

That's completely understandable.

Support is available.

You can learn the process, ask questions, connect with other families, and become a confident advocate for your child.

Advocacy isn't about knowing everything. It's about continuing to learn and making informed decisions one step at a time.

PARENT REFLECTION



Take a few minutes to reflect.

Questions to Consider:

- What are my child's greatest strengths?
- What questions do I still have?
- What goals do I hope my child achieves this school year?
- How can I prepare for my next meeting?

Helpful Resources

- Download additional free parent toolkits at:
- www.LiberatedHands.com
- Watch the companion YouTube episode:
- 5 Things Every Parent Should Know About Special Education.

Every child learns differently, and every parent's journey is unique. Keep asking questions, keep learning, and keep advocating. Small steps today can lead to meaningful progress tomorrow.