



TAKING OWNERSHIP OF YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION

TOP 10 STRATEGIES TRANSITIONING BACK TO SCHOOL 2023-2024

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How to navigate your child's special education journey

1. **Demystifying the new IEP in Connecticut as it relates to your child. Review your child's IEP (Individual Education Plan) and/or 504 Accommodations Plan.** Be certain that you understand the goals, objectives, services, accommodations and staff who are key to implementing the IEP or 504 plan. Will the services and staff contained in your child's IEP be in place throughout the school year? If not why not? *If you are starting the school year without these documents in hand call the school ASAP and request a copy of the IEP or 504 Plan. You can also check CT SEDS (parent portal).*
2. **Familiarize** yourself with the terms and acronyms in the IEP. Do you understand the language used in the IEP? For a useful guide to the ABC's of special education and related acronyms:
<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/acronyms/>
3. **Request** an informal meeting with school staff to review your concerns if there are questions about the implementation of the IEP or the Section 504 plan.
4. **Confirm** that the school staff has acquired the training in certain areas of delivering the IEP services to your child since the last PPT meeting. If the school's staff was required to obtain training in certain areas in order to deliver the IEP services to your child, have you confirmed that the school staff has acquired that training since your last PPT? If the school was supposed to purchase equipment, technology or software/APPS, have you confirmed that this will be in place at the commencement of the school year?

5. **Request** the scheduling of a formal PPT meeting as soon as possible to review and address your concerns, if your concerns with the IEP are not addressed through an informal meeting.

6. **Meet** with the staff assigned to your child for the new school year. Discuss how you want to monitor your child's progress and how you want to be informed: daily, weekly, monthly, and what form the communication will take such as meetings, telephone calls, or emails. Consider developing a communications plan with your child's teacher and other staff to ensure there is regular back and forth communications.

7. **Acclimate** your child to the school environment to ease the level of anxiety, especially if your child was not attending in-person instruction during the previous school year. Plan for you and a school staff member to walk a child around the school building to meet with school staff, to locate classrooms and lockers, and to become familiar with the layout of the school building, especially if it is a new school environment for your child.

8. **Discuss** your concerns with your child's transition to the 2023-2024 school year. This past school year has caused much anxiety for parents and students alike due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Did you notice any changes in your child's behaviors, health, level of anxiety, social skills, and development of academic skills during the past school year or so? Did your child's pediatrician or other treating professionals have any developmental or medical concerns? If so, consider sharing this information with the school.

9. **Ensure** that you are on the same wave length with your child's teachers. Send your child's teachers a letter or e-mail that describes your perceptions of your child's strengths, weaknesses, learning style(s), behaviors, social issues, and any other concerns that you may have for the 2023-2024 school year, such as a profile of your child from a parents' perspective on what works, what does not work, and any other information that would ensure a successful commencement of the school year.

10. **Mask Mandates, Vaccinations, and COVID-19 Policy Guidance** - we are still in the midst of an ever-evolving situation affecting our lives and the lives of our children with the COVID-19 virus. In order to make informed decisions about your child's education, you should consult your own medical professionals, local health department, State Department of Public Health, State Department of Education, your school's health director (often the school

nurse), and/or the Center for Disease Control (CDC) for latest Guidance on vaccination requirements; as well as the COVID-19 health and safety protocols, as they pertain to your child's circumstances.

The Last Word: Your Child's Educational Future Matters We all start the school year with the greatest of hope and expectations. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed our lives and the lives of our children as we were dealing with mask mandates, issues with vaccinations, potential lapses in the student's development of academic skills, social skills, and emotional coping skills. We hope all that has changed for the 2023-2024 school year. If those expectations are not met to your satisfaction within a reasonable amount of time and your child continues to struggle, or you feel your child is continuing to achieve below his or her potential, then you have rights to pursue as outlined in your IDEA "*Procedural Safeguards*." Those rights include a plan of action: reviewing your concerns at a PPT meeting, obtaining outside evaluations and/or pursuing other administrative remedies. Students (over 14 or 15 years old) should become familiar with transition planning and transition resources including the *Transition Bill of Rights* available on the State Department of Education website: CT.gov.

Attorney Lawrence Berliner has practiced special education law, disability law and legal advocacy throughout Connecticut for over 40 years. Get in touch with him via e-mail lwb.esq@gmail.com or telephone **(203) 255-0582**. He is available for consultations to discuss your concerns and next steps via Zoom or telephone. Please consult Attorney Berliner's website for additional information:
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