



TAKING OWNERSHIP OF YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION

TOP 10 STRATEGIES TO TRANSITIONING BACK TO SCHOOL 2026-2027

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How to navigate your child's special education journey

- 1) **Demystifying the IEP (Individual Education Plan) in Connecticut as it relates to your child. Start with a review your child's IEP 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 the 504 plan. Note: Public Act 25-67 made some changes to the IEP that will be effective during the 2026-2027 school year. Will the services and staff contained in your child's IEP be in place throughout the school year? If not why not? (Note: Many school districts are reporting staffing shortages.). *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 the parent portal on CT SEDS.*
- 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) **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, educational methodology, and/or other services in order to deliver the IEP and related services to your child, have you confirmed that the school staff has acquired that methodology and/or training since your last PPT meeting? 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?
4. **Schedule** an informal meeting with school staff to review your concerns if there are questions with the implementation of the IEP or the Section 504 plan.
- 5) **Request** a formal PPT meeting or 504 Plan Meeting as soon as possible to review and address any outstanding questions or concerns if the IEP or 504 plan were not addressed to your satisfaction through an informal meeting with school staff.

6) **Meet** with the school staff assigned to your child. Discuss how you would like to monitor your child's progress, and how you want to be informed of progress: daily, weekly, monthly, and what form the communication will occur such as meetings, telephone calls, or e-mails. Consider developing a communications plan with your child's teacher and other staff to ensure there is regular back and forth feedback and communications.

7) **Orient and/or Re-orient** your child to the school environment to ease the level of anxiety, especially if your child will be attending a new school setting than 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 placement for your child.

8) **Discuss** your concerns with your child's transition to the new school year. Have you noticed any changes in your child's behaviors, health, level of anxiety, social skills, and the development and acquisition 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 personnel.

9) **Ensure** that you are on the same wave length with your child's teachers. Consider sending your child's teachers a letter or e-mail that describes your perceptions of your child's strengths, weaknesses, learning style, behaviors, social issues, and any other concerns that you may have for the new 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 contribute to a successful school year.

10) Other Concerns- we are still dealing with ever-evolving situation affecting our lives and the lives of our children since the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies derived from the so-called 'Nation's Report Card' continue to document a learning loss. Other studies have demonstrated an ever-increasing level of anxiety at school for many students and in some cases their parents. 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), for updated information and resources as they pertain to your child's unique circumstances.

Students over 14 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: https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/special-education/trans_bill_of_rights_for_parents_of_students_receiving_sped_services.pdf?rev=c8e669dce9be43548782a061066f595b

You should review the changes in the state and federal special education laws. There were recent changes to the state special education laws with the enactment of Public Act 25 -67 that was effective on July 1, 2025. (A brief summary of Public Act 25-67 is available here: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2025/ACT/PA/PDF/2025PA-00067-R00HB-05001-PA.PDF>)

Many changes to the federal special education laws may or may not go into effect well after the commencement of the 2025-26 school year, depending upon the outcome of pending litigation in the federal courts; Congressional actions; and the decisions, including Executive Orders that have been issued by the President to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education's role in the administration of the federal special education laws and attempts to reduce the federal funding of the special education programs.

One Final Thought: Your Child's Educational Future Matters to You- As parents and family members, you are in the best position to observe your child progress and the generalization of skills that were supposedly learned at school. You see your child in multiple settings and not only a school setting. We all start the new school year with the greatest of hope and expectations. If your expectations are not met to your satisfaction within a reasonable amount of time by the school district, and your child continues to struggle because you believe your child is achieving below his or her potential, then you have rights to pursue as outlined in your IDEA "*Procedural Safeguards*." Those rights provide a plan of action including reviewing your concerns at a PPT meeting, obtaining outside independent evaluations and/or pursuing other administrative remedies such as a filing an informal complaint with the State Department of Education or filing a request for a Due Process hearing. For students with a Section 504 Plan, there is a different set of "*Procedural Safeguards*."

MAKING A DIFFERENCE! ONE FAMILY AT A TIME

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

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