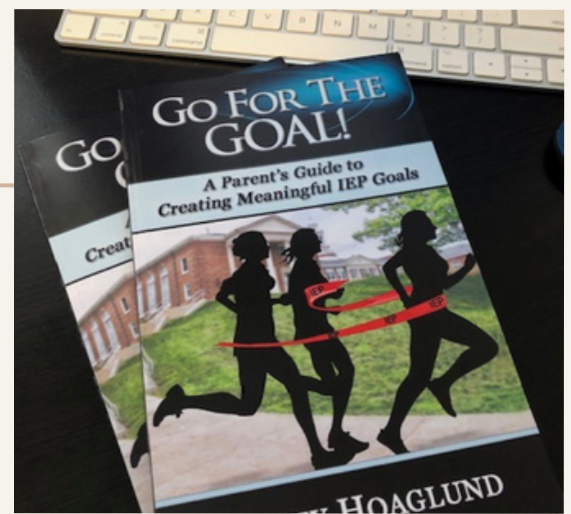




Let's Get Going

ADVOCACY START UP GUIDE

IN THIS WORKBOOK, WE'LL GO OVER THE BASICS OF
BUILDING YOUR ADVOCACY SKILLS, SHARING
INFORMATION ON HOW TO GET STARTED AND WHAT
TO FOCUS ON AS YOU BEGIN YOUR JOURNEY





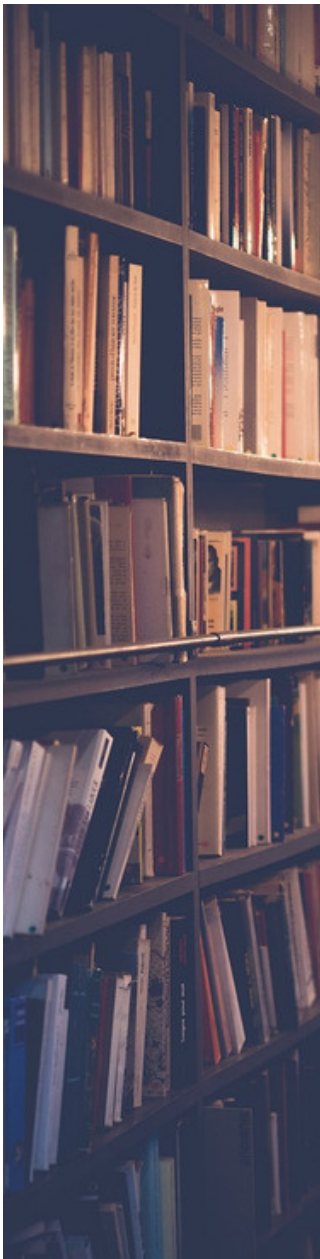
Hello and Welcome!

Never has there been a time when advocacy has been more important. But, sadly, most parents do not know their rights, or how to identify the enormous potential of their children. This combination proliferates a broken system plagued with mediocrity and de minimis outcomes. The good news is that change is possible!

This tool will equip new advocates with core knowledge and skills in advocating for children with disabilities inside our public school system. While advocacy includes a wide breadth of information and learning that is critical to developing best outcomes, consider this just a starting point to your pathway of success!



FIRST STEPS IN Education Advocacy



Effective special education advocacy can be a huge challenge, and if you're the parent of a child with special needs, you know that advocating for your child can be a full-time job. From ensuring they receive appropriate evaluations to securing supported inclusion and services, you may not even know where to even begin.

#1 Educate Yourself

Before you do anything else, you must know your rights and have at least a familiarity of how the "system" works (which is definitely NOT something you learned in school). Educate yourself on your child's specific disability and the available resources. This can be done by reading books and articles and talking to other parents and professionals familiar with the challenges of parenting a child with special needs.

#2 Get Organized and Keep Good Records

It can be difficult to keep track of everything when you're advocating for your child. You may be dealing with your own set of challenges at home and it's easy for things to fall through the cracks.

That's why it's important to stay organized and keep track of all communications, evaluations, IEPs, etc. This will help ensure that nothing is missed when you're fighting for what your child needs. It'll also help you keep track of what's been done and what still needs to be done. Advocacy can be daunting, but staying organized will help you monitor things and ensure your child gets the support he or she needs.



Advocacy is
knowing
that you can
make a
difference!

Two men were walking on a beach where hundreds of starfish had washed up onto the sand. The old man was picking them up one by one, tossing them back into the ocean. The young man said, "There are too many; you'll never make a difference." The old man bent down, picked up another one and threw it into the sea and said, "I just made a difference for that one."

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is EVERYTHING

You may have not gone to school to become a lawyer, but parents of kids with disabilities quickly find that they need to know more about the law than they ever thought they would.

The IDEA is your guiding light, your protection to ensure your child gets all that they should. It is SO much easier to advocate when you know what the law says and can use it to push the system to do the job

it was entrusted to do (and get funded to do) - provide your child with a free and appropriate public education (FAPE).

IDEA is a federal law that guarantees all children with IEPs the right to FAPE in the least restrictive environment. This means that your child has the right to attend school and receive an education that is tailored to their individual needs. Familiarizing yourself with the law will empower you to advocate for your child and ensure they receive the education they deserve.

How will you know if FAPE is being provided?

- ✓ Progress toward grade-level achievement should be occurring
 - ✓ Realizing the benefits of instruction. Accommodations, modifications, and support services provided to the student must be sufficient for the child to benefit from the instruction they receive
 - ✓ College or career readiness. Students must receive social, academic, and emotional tools that will help prepare them for the future
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FIVE SIGNS OF A GOOD IEP

1. A Present Level of Performance that's "present", meaning recent, with data from assessments. Check your IEP to ensure assessments are documented. If they're not, ask the school for updated assessments and make sure the scores are added to the plan.
2. Indicators that progress has taken place. The assessment data and work samples should show that your child is making "meaningful progress". FAPE requires that your child get what they need, when they need it.
3. Goals that are meaningful and measurable. Request a draft of the new IEP, pull out last year's IEP and look to see if the goals are the same. It doesn't matter what your child's disability is; they SHOULD BE making progress.



*If you don't
pursue it,
you'll never
catch it.*

"What gets measured, gets mastered." - Peter Drucker

4. Accommodations that promote inclusion. The purpose of special education is to give kids what they need SO THAT they can perform better in the regular education setting. While there are some kids who need a hefty amount of specialized instruction, the goal should always be to include them into a regular setting.
5. Services that yield positive results. Oftentimes, we put services on an IEP, like Intensive Instruction in Academics, Behavior, Independent Functioning and Communication (code for a segregated classroom). If this setting is actually “intensive”, then we would expect meaningful and documented progress to take place. So, if your child’s IEP looks the same year after year, then the setting and services are NOT working, and the team should be having serious conversations about what else can be done.

Look at your IEP, determine if progress is being made, and if there is a problem, don’t wait. Call for an IEP meeting now.



EXERCISE #1

Are Your Goals SMART?

SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely and incorporate all of these criteria to help focus the efforts and increase the chances of achieving the goal.

Here is an example of a SMART goal:

By August 2024, Jane Smith will complete multi-step classroom assignments that have been chunked into smaller segments, given an individual explicit/direct clarification of direction, checklist of the assignment and gestural prompting in 4 out of 5 opportunities.

1.

2.

3.



Use this example to write 3 SMART goals, taking into account the needs and abilities of your child.

EXERCISE #2

Services and Inclusive Education

Inclusive education and special education services are put into place based upon the goals written on the IEP. Knowing what you know about your child and the goals you've just created, what special education services do you believe they need in order to achieve their goals?

SAMPLE SERVICES

- ☐ Intensive Instruction
- ☐ Specialized Instruction
- ☐ Support Facilitation
- ☐ Collaboration in....
- ☐ Consultation in ...



SAMPLE RELATED SERVICES

- ☐ Speech Therapy
- ☐ Language Therapy
- ☐ Occupational Therapy
- ☐ Physical Therapy
- ☐ Counseling Services



EXERCISE #3

Vision for Your Child's Future

IDEA law mandates that schools provide transition services - The purpose of which is to facilitate the student's move from school to post-school activities (employment or higher education).

1. What are your child's interests and how can they be included in their goals for the future?

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2. What services are being put in place to specifically focus on creating a seamless transition out of school?

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Notes:

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Thank you!

If you want to have an exceptional life and do exceptional things, you have to put yourself in exceptional situations.

While you want to build positive relationships with your child's school, you also want to be persistent and prepared.

There is nothing more important than ensuring that your children have what they need to lead happy, healthy and successful lives with the highest quality of life possible.

Do You Need More Help?

Get a Sample List of Accommodations

Access my website and Youtube channel to obtain a practical vision of how a parent or a professional can become an advocate to achieve a more inclusive and rewarding education for their child.

