

## **Tips For Parents**<sup>1</sup>

In working with your child's school, it may help to remember the following:

1. *Ask for what you think your child needs. Share your expectations for your child.* Put your hopes and requests in writing, if necessary.
2. *Be courteous and civil.* Educators are people like everyone else; they appreciate being treated nicely. Assertiveness, combined with a cooperative attitude, is more persuasive than aggressiveness or hostility.
3. *Know your rights and responsibilities.* If you do not have information on your rights and responsibilities under federal and state law when you need it, ask the school district for it and study it.
4. *Ask for explanations of what you do not understand.* You should not feel that you are "in the dark." For instance, you should understand your child's evaluation data, current levels of educational performance, and progress under the IEP.
5. *Be willing to share information about your child with the school.* Keep important medical records, past school records, and so on.
6. *Understand the school's challenges and burdens.* Realize that sometimes your request may not be realistic. In general, educators are overworked and underpaid. They get tired like parents. Funds are limited. IDEA does not require schools to fulfill a child's potential but rather to meet the child's special needs in a way that provides meaningful progress toward IEP goals.
7. *Be willing to participate in meetings that determine your child's eligibility, IEP, and placement under IDEA.* Also be willing to help your child at home and in school, if appropriate. Never forget that you are an important teacher of your child.
8. *Be willing to "brainstorm" various options to meet your child's needs.* Keep an open mind about different solutions for solving a problem.
9. *Work for "win-win" solutions to problems.* Education is not like competitive athletics. No one should have to lose.
10. *Know where to turn for help.* Resources include your child's teacher and principal, school district special education director, parent advocacy group, and public library.

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from: Huefner, D. S. (2000). *Getting comfortable with special education law: A framework for working with children with disabilities*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon. Book is available from publisher's website.