

Educational Advocacy and Resources

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Why advocate?

Realities of Special Education Services

- Students with disabilities may be more challenging/costly to educate
- School staff may unknowingly or knowingly reduce expectations
- Entitled to Free, Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment
- Few entitlements in adulthood

Importance of Parent's Role

- You are
 - the expert on your child!
 - the only IEP team member with a lifelong interest in your child

Ideally parents will learn

- Basics of child's disability (every child is unique)

Resource

Genetics Education Materials for School Success (GEMSS)

- IEP process

Resource

Organizing Information and Creating an IEP

Ideally parents will learn

- Collaboration and Negotiation skills

Resources

The Art of Collaboration and Negotiation

**Creating Agreement, Conflict Resolution,
and Collaborative Problem Solving**

- Familiarity with special education laws

Resource **Wrightslaw Home**

Educational Placement

- Federal special ed law requires the “Least Restrictive Environment”
- “To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities... are educated with children who are nondisabled; and Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.”

Supplementary Aids and Services

- No limit for IEP team to consider
- Categories
 - Collaborative
 - Instructional
 - Physical
 - Social-Behavioral

Potential advantages of inclusive classrooms

- Access to regular ed curriculum
 - Higher expectations
- Language-rich environment
- Same-age, typically-developing peer models

Critical Skills to learn

- Communication
 - Everyone needs a method to communicate
 - verbal, communication board, communication device (iPad, Dynavox)
- Social skills
 - Often lower priority to academics

Assistive Technology

- Often underutilized
- Augmentative and alternative communication
- Expressive writing
- Low tech to high tech

Resource Center for Applied Special
Technology <http://www.cast.org/>

Create a vision with your child

- Vision for adulthood
 - Employment
 - Home
 - Social networks, etc.
- May consider a formal, facilitated process
 - MAPS
 - PATH
- Identify and develop the skills needed

State Resources

- Parent Training and Information Centers

[http://www.parentcenternetwork.org/
parentcenterlisting.html](http://www.parentcenternetwork.org/parentcenterlisting.html)

- University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

[http://www.aucd.org/directory/directory.cfm?
program=UCEDD](http://www.aucd.org/directory/directory.cfm?program=UCEDD)

Extracurricular activities

Separate vs. Integrated?

- Advantages of separate
 - Easier to access
 - Accept wide range of abilities
 - Typically more support staff
 - Peers with more similar interests
 - Subsidized funding more likely

Separate vs. Integrated?

- Advantages of integrated
 - Typically-developing peers
 - Better role models
 - Higher expectations



Strategies for inclusive extracurricular activities

- Research!
- Consider strengths and interests
- Verify staff ratio and experience
- Provide written strategies
- Provide assistance, if needed

Concluding thoughts

- Continue to maintain high expectations
- Continue active involvement in your child's education