PREPARING FOR AN IEP MEETING

Correspondence & Paperwork

	Organize all records about your child. You may want to put them in a 3-ring binder. You can organize them chronologically or by section (evaluations, IEPs, report cards, letters, etc.).
	Review your child's records. Make an appointment with the school prior to the IEP meeting and review what is in your child's records. Go over your own records at home to make sure they coincide with those kept at school. Remember to request and keep copies of all records.
	Prepare to share what you know about your child. Write down some notes about your child to share at the meeting such as: interests, hobbies, relationship with family and friends, behavior at home, things he/she does well and has difficulty with, likes and dislikes.
	Prepare your own questions. Ask for a blank copy of the IEP form showing the components and share questions you would like to ask at the meeting. Bring the list with you.
	Prepare your own agenda for the meeting. Your questions can be part of the agenda, so that you don't forget them. Share the agenda with the school before the meeting.
	Be prepared to talk about your expectations for your child. Write down what you think your child needs and how much progress you would like to see him/her make during the year.
	Be prepared to provide your documentation (outside evaluations, data, etc.) to show a need if you will be requesting new services or changes in services.
	Get copies of any recent evaluations or reports done outside of school to share with the school. Share any reports that you want the IEP team to consider. Provide copies in advance so they have time to review them before the meeting.
	Collect samples of your child's work from activities done in or out of school. Use samples that you feel say something about your child and that help to show what he/she does well and what may be difficult.
	Keep good records of all communication related to your child. After each telephone call or meeting, write down what was said and who was on each call or in each meeting. Document each important conversation with a follow-up letter.
	Remember to put it in writing. Document any request or concern in writing to the school. If it is in writing, you have documentation that you shared your concerns or questions with the school.

Communication

	Talk to your child. Find out how your child feels about school. Find out his/her likes and dislikes. Ask if there is something he/she would like to do better. If your child is not verbal, think about other ways to get his or her input.
	Talk to other parents. Learn from their experiences at IEP meetings. Attend support groups and informational meetings/seminars. Contact Parent to Parent of Georgia to ask for a supporting parent, parent tutor or IEP buddy.
	Talk to your Child's teachers and therapists before the Meeting. Get an update on your child's Achievements and behavior during the school year.
	Ask who will be attending the meeting. Call the school and ask. Is there anyone not present from school or outside of school whom you would like to invite? Notify the school if you are bringing someone (friend, relative, advocate, Physician, outside evaluator, etc.) from outside of school. It should be someone who knows your child and his/her needs.

Miscellaneous Tasks

	Visit your child's classroom. Make an appointment to observe your child in the classroom. You may also want to observe your child in the cafeteria during lunch and/or on the playground during recess.
	Think about whether or not your child should be involved at the IEP meeting and discuss this with your child's teacher or other school personnel. Ask your child if he/she would like to attend.
	Understand the nature and basis of your child's disability. Do you have enough information about your child's diagnosis? Have you reviewed the evaluation reports? Do you understand the diagnosis? Do you understand any abbreviations or "jargon"?
	Become familiar with the Laws of Georgia and the Federal Government related to special education. Find out what services your child may be entitled to. Get a copy of IDEA 2004 and read it. Attend Seminars and training to learn your rights. You can get a copy of IDEA 2004 Regulations at http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view/p/%2Croot%2Cregs%2C You can get Georgia Department of Education Rules at http://www.gadoe.org/pea_board.aspx?PageReq=PEABoardRules Or you can Call Parent to Parent of Georgia at 1-800-229-2038 for assistance in obtaining copies.

Credits: Connecticut Parent Advocacy Newsletter; Special Education Network of New Canaan, Ltd.