

## Meeting-Day Playbook

# IEP Quick-Reference Guide

*Move the room from emotion to evidence in five moves.*

### How to use this guide

Print it. Keep it next to your workbook. Glance at it whenever the conversation drifts from your child's data.

Each section gives you a script, a rationale, and the IDEA citation you can reference if the team pushes back.

You will not need every page — pull the one you need in the moment.

## The Five Moves

A repeatable structure to keep the meeting collaborative and grounded in evidence.

### 1. Anchor in strengths

Open by stating two or three concrete strengths or successes. Sets a collaborative tone and signals you see your child as more than a list of deficits.

### 2. Present the data

Walk through your PLAAFP summary and evidence log. Refer to documents by tab/page. Numbers and dates carry the conversation.

### 3. State each need as a connection

Pattern: 'The data shows X. Because of X, my child needs Y to access Z.' This frames every request as derived from evidence, not preference.

### 4. Ask, don't tell

When you disagree, ask a question first: 'What data led to that recommendation?' / 'What other options did the team consider?' Forces the rationale into the record.

### 5. Document and decide later

If you can't agree, ask for the item to be documented in the Prior Written Notice and decide after you review at home. You do not have to sign at the table.

# Opening the Meeting

*The first three minutes set the tone. Use them deliberately.*

## Your opening script

### Suggested opener

"Thank you all for being here. Before we start, I want to share a few things that have been going well for [child] this year, and then I have a written set of concerns and questions I would like the team to consider as we work through the agenda."

"I have brought data and documentation organized by topic — I will reference page numbers as we go. My goal today is for us to build a plan together that is measurable and tied to [child]'s evaluated needs."

### Set the agenda

Ask the chair to confirm the agenda includes: review of PLAAFP, progress on current goals, parental concerns, proposed new goals, services and accommodations, placement/LRE, and next steps. If anything is missing, request it now in writing.

## Scripts: Emotion → Evidence

*When you feel the conversation drifting into opinion, frustration, or generalities, pivot with one of these.*

### When you hear vague reassurance

Instead of	<i>He's doing fine. He's making progress.</i>
Try saying	"Can we look at the specific data points? What does the progress monitoring show compared to baseline and the goal criterion?"

### When a request is dismissed

Instead of	<i>We don't do that here. / That's not something we offer.</i>
Try saying	"Help me understand — under IDEA, services are based on individual need, not program availability. What does the data say my child needs to access FAPE?"

### When you feel emotional

Instead of	<i>(Tears, frustration, anger rising.)</i>
Try saying	"I'd like a five-minute break, and then I'll come back to my list."

### When a teacher gives an opinion

Instead of	<i>I just don't think he's ready for that.</i>
Try saying	"I appreciate that perspective. What classroom data are we using to evaluate readiness? Can we identify the criterion that would indicate readiness?"

## When the team rejects an outside evaluation

Instead of	<i>We don't agree with the private report.</i>
Try saying	"Under IDEA, the team must consider outside evaluations. Can you document which findings the team accepts, which it rejects, and the rationale, in the Prior Written Notice?"

## When pressed to sign

Instead of	<i>Can you just sign here so we can finalize?</i>
Try saying	"I'd like to take the draft home, review it against my notes, and return it within [X] days. I'll sign attendance today."

## When you don't have an answer yet

Instead of	<i>(You're not sure how to respond.)</i>
Try saying	"I want to give that a careful answer. Can we table it and come back to it before we close, or schedule a follow-up?"

## IDEA Citations to Keep Handy

Reference these when the team needs to be reminded of what the law requires. Citations are to 34 CFR Part 300 (the federal regulations implementing IDEA).

Topic	What IDEA requires
FAPE – Free Appropriate Public Education	Schools must provide special education and related services designed to meet a child's unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. 34 CFR §300.17 · §300.101 · <i>Endrew F. v. Douglas County (2017)</i> – IEPs must be 'reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances.'
LRE – Least Restrictive Environment	Children with disabilities must be educated with non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. Removal only when the nature/severity of disability is such that education in regular classes with aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. 34 CFR §300.114
PLAAFP	Each IEP must include a statement of the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, including how the disability affects involvement and progress in the general curriculum. 34 CFR §300.320(a)(1)
Measurable annual goals	Each IEP must include a statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals, designed to meet the child's needs. 34 CFR §300.320(a)(2)
Progress reporting	The IEP must describe how progress toward annual goals will be measured and when periodic reports will be provided. 34 CFR §300.320(a)(3)
Parent participation	Parents are equal members of the IEP team. The team must consider parents' concerns for enhancing their child's education. 34 CFR §300.321(a)(1) · §300.324(a)(1)(ii) · §300.501(b)
Special factors – including AT	The IEP team must consider assistive technology, communication needs, behavior, English learner status, and Braille for blind/visually impaired students. 34 CFR §300.324(a)(2)
Prior Written Notice (PWN)	The district must give written notice a reasonable time before it proposes or refuses to initiate or change identification, evaluation, placement, or FAPE. Notice must include description, explanation, evaluations relied upon, other options considered and why rejected, and other relevant factors. 34 CFR §300.503
Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)	If you disagree with the school's evaluation, you have the right to request an IEE at public expense. 34 CFR §300.502

Transition services (age 16+)	Beginning not later than the first IEP in effect when the child turns 16, the IEP must include measurable postsecondary goals and transition services. 34 CFR §300.320(b)
Procedural safeguards	Parents have the right to mediation, due process complaints, and state complaints. The full procedural safeguards notice must be provided annually. 34 CFR §300.504 · §300.506 · §300.507 · §300.151-153

# Phrases That Shift the Room

*Short, neutral phrases to keep the meeting collaborative and data-driven.*

## To request data

- "Can we look at the specific data point on that?"
- "What is the baseline, and what is the criterion for mastery?"
- "How often is that being measured, and by whom?"
- "Can we see the progress monitoring graph?"

## To request a rationale

- "What evidence supports that recommendation?"
- "What other options did the team consider, and why were they rejected?"
- "How does that connect to my child's documented need?"

## To stay collaborative

- "Help me understand the team's thinking here."
- "I want to make sure we are looking at the same evidence."
- "Let's see if we can agree on what the data shows, and then talk about what to do about it."

## To slow things down

- "Can we pause and document where we are?"
- "I'd like a few minutes to review my notes before we move on."
- "Can we table this and come back to it?"

## To preserve your rights

- "I'd like that documented in the Prior Written Notice."
- "I'll take the draft home and respond in writing within [X] days."
- "I'd like to request a copy of my procedural safeguards."

## If the Meeting Goes Sideways

*Three options when you cannot reach agreement at the table.*

### 1. Request Prior Written Notice (PWN)

Ask the district to document any proposal or refusal in writing, including the evaluations relied on and other options considered and rejected. This is required under 34 CFR §300.503 and creates a paper trail for future challenges.

### 2. Request an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)

If you disagree with the school's evaluation in any area (academic, behavioral, OT, SLP, etc.), you can request an IEE at public expense under 34 CFR §300.502. The district must either pay for the IEE or file due process to defend its evaluation.

### 3. Use procedural safeguards

If unresolved, you can request mediation, file a state complaint, or file for due process. All three are described in the procedural safeguards notice the district must give you annually.

## Before You Leave the Meeting

*Quick verification — do not skip.*

- Every concern I raised was discussed and noted in the IEP.
- Every documented need has a matching goal and a matching service or accommodation.
- Each new goal has baseline, criterion, timeline, measurement method.
- Progress reports: frequency and format are written into the IEP.
- Service grid lists frequency, duration, location, start date, end date.
- AT was discussed; decision is documented.
- Any disagreement is noted; I requested PWN where appropriate.
- I have or will receive a draft within the timeline I requested.
- I have a copy of the procedural safeguards.
- I signed attendance only (unless I have decided to consent today).

### Final reminder

You are a legally equal member of the team. The IEP is a collaborative legal document — not a take-it-or-leave-it offer.

If you need time, take it. If you need data, ask for it. If you disagree, document it.