

BEGINNING OF SCHOOL YEAR CHECKLIST

It is that time of the year when school is back in session and you and your child are navigating a new school year, adjusting to his/her classroom or teacher, and acclimating to the school structure. As a parent, what is your role in your child's education? Is there anything you should be doing as you and your child prepare for a new school year?

REVIEW YOUR CHILD'S EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR ("ESY") PROGRESS.

If your child participated in ESY, you should have received a progress report on the goals that were addressed during the summer. More importantly, your child's new teacher should have received the progress reports.

Make sure you have a good understanding of the nature of progress that was made over the summer, and if progress was not as expected, what educational interventions or modifications to your child's programming were attempted to address the lack of progress.

If there was sufficient progress, make sure your child's classroom teacher has an understanding of the types of educational interventions and programming that were successful over the summer.

REVIEW YOUR CHILD'S IEP.

Your child's IEP should clearly tell you where your child is functioning academically, socially and/or emotionally, and explain what skills are needed for him/her to progress educationally. Are the goals that your child is working on measurable? In other words, is there a clear starting point (present level of performance) and a clear ending point (the goal)? Is the goal something that can be measured by objective data?

An example of a measurable writing goal is:

Present Level of Performance: The student can currently write and identify/name 13 of the uppercase letters and 6 lowercase letters.

Annual Goal: The student will correctly write and identify/name all 26 of the uppercase and lowercase letters with 100% accuracy in 7 out of 10 trials by the annual review of the IEP.

Note how the present level of performance describes the same skill that the goal is measuring. That is important.



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CONSIDER UPDATING PRIVATE EVALUATION/ BASELINE DATA.

If you are relying upon private evaluations to assist in evaluating your child's progress, assess whether additional, updated testing is appropriate. Generally speaking, standardized testing cannot be repeated within a calendar year, although this is a conversation you should have with your private evaluator.

Whether it is time to conduct additional testing is an issue that requires an analysis of many factors, including the age of the child, the nature of the disability, and the educational progress being made. It is beyond the scope of this checklist to address these factors; however, we recommend that parents discuss this issue with their private evaluators on at least an annual basis.

PLAN A MEETING.

Many parents do not realize that they can ask for an IEP meeting and that IEP meetings can be scheduled in addition to the annual review. If there are significant issues with your child's educational programming or progress, they should be addressed through the IEP process. Minor issues can be addressed through informal school team meetings or meetings with the classroom teacher. As always, make sure you document what occurred at any meeting, what was said or promised, and ultimately what action was taken, if any.

SET UP A FALL OBSERVATION.

Often times it is helpful to get an independent view of the educational programming for your child. An observation can be done by either an appropriate school staff member who does not regularly work with your child or by your own independent private expert.

This can be particularly helpful when there is a disagreement over the educational interventions, perceived level of progress, or the behavioral intervention plan. This may not be necessary if your child is progressing nicely in his/her current school program and educational setting.



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