

Do You Know My Rights?

By: Laura S. Nata

We talk about going to IEP meetings, how it works and how to prepare. However, in all my years of advocacy very few parents ask if they can invite their child to their IEP/504 meetings. So I ask why? Answers are always the same; I did not know I could!

Well, I am here to tell you to invite your child to the meetings; they have the right to attend at any age and should attend especially during high school years.



Excuse your child if the meeting gets negative. My son participated in these meetings since first grade. Too young? Maybe. However, together we

learned to best prepare before these meetings to be more productive. This gave him an opportunity to voice concerns and opinions and thru time it became easier for him. I was very proud to witness my son guide his educational planning for his future.

Why was he successful? It took years of preparation and practice for him to take ownership of his educational plan. I always felt I needed to allow him growth, as his older brother, with guidance. The more your child is actively involved in making decisions, the better outcomes he will experience.

Most people gripe and moan about upcoming IEP meet-

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ings they must attend. This is something you don't want to teach your child, quite the contrary. This is all about your child's future. Meetings are teachable moments for your child and yourself. Mary Jacob, the Executive Director of FHF, daughter attended her first IEP meeting in 2nd grade. She says she'll never forget the impact her daughter had on the meeting and team when her Language Arts teacher was expressing her concern about everything she couldn't do and suddenly her young daughter spoke up and said "how do you know I can't do it if you never asked me to do it?"

Below are two links I recommend that you read. Remember my motto: "**An informed parent will not experience a child left behind.**" The same goes for students, don't leave yourself behind!

This guidance IEP Meetings, Tips for Teens from Pacer Center can be found at:
<http://www.pacer.org/parent/php/php-c149.pdf>

Students on the IEP team. What does this look like? The IEP is about *them and they have the* right to attend the meeting and much more at:
<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/iep-studentsonteam/>



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