

Lessons in Advocating

Here are 10 things that parents who advocate for their special-education students should know how to do:

1. Gather information: Educate yourself about the child's disability and special-education law.
2. Learn the rules of the game: Know how decisions within a school district are made and by whom.
3. Plan and prepare: Get ready for meetings, create agendas, write out objectives.
4. Keep written records: Take down what was said and by whom, make requests in writing.
5. Ask questions, listen to answers: Know how to use "who, what, where, why, when and how" and how to request explanations.
6. Identify problems: Learn to define and describe problems; be a problem solver instead of blaming others.
7. Propose solutions: Offer your own win-win proposals.
8. Plan for the future: Have a vision of what your child's long-term future looks like.
9. Answer questions: Know the answer to "What do you (as the advocate) want?"
10. Develop a master plan: Create a broad strategy for reaching your and your child's goals.

-- Taken from Wrightslaw.com