

Parent Self-Advocacy in the IEP Process

Key Principles of Self-Advocacy

- Know your rights: Learn about IDEA, Section 504, and state special education laws.
- Be informed: Stay updated on evaluations, progress reports, and IEP documents.
- Speak up: Clearly share your child's strengths, needs, and your concerns.
- Stay child-focused: Keep discussions centered on your child's success.
- Use 'I' statements: Say 'I am concerned about...' instead of 'You aren't doing...'.
- Ask questions: Request clarification when jargon or unclear terms are used.
- Document everything: Follow up meetings or calls with emails to create a record.

Practical Self-Advocacy Skills

- Prepare ahead: Bring a list of priorities, questions, and work samples.
- Bring support: You can invite an advocate, friend, or family member.
- Stay calm and professional: Respectful communication strengthens your voice.
- Request data: Ask how your child's progress will be measured and shared.
- Know your next steps: If you disagree, request another meeting, mediation, or due process.

Mindset for Parents

- You are not 'difficult' for speaking up—you are advocating.
- You know your child best; your input is essential.
- Collaboration is powerful, but persistence may be necessary.

Remember: You are your child's strongest advocate. By being informed, prepared, and confident, you help shape an education plan that truly supports your child's success.