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Notes from the Special Education Workshop Nov. 13/10

Special education can be confusing and intimidating. This workshop will be a hands-on session to help problem solve and give parents practical tips for navigating the special education system. Good for school council members so that they can help parents in their schools, and for parents of children with special needs.

Diane Wagner – Diane has been with the [Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario](#) (LDAO) since 1987. In her position as Manager of Public Policy, Client Services and Training, Diane communicates with parents, individuals with learning disabilities, professionals, educators, employers and students around the province.

Please note: Handout 'Navigating the Special Education System – A Challenging Journey' was distributed

Highlights

IPRC (Identification, Placement, and Review Committee) & Individual Education Plans (IEPs)

- IPRC is the only process that identifies students as 'exceptional' *in the legal sense* however students **do** have IEPs without an IPRC.
- A parent can initiate the IPRC by submitting a letter to the principal, after the letter is submitted, a meeting must ensue – parents have the right to initiate the process
- There are no legalities that mandate telling parents they have a right to request an IPRC – this is concerning. One participant commented 'How are parents supposed to know what to ask for if they are not informed?'
- Most common IPRC decision – student placed in a 'regular class with supports'. This is also troublesome as there is no criteria for what 'supports' mean
- Thus, it is very important that parents thoroughly read all documents (IPRC statement of decision, IEP consultation records) before signing
- There are 2 Lists that students are usually put on pertaining to assessments
 - 1) Assessment List – for those without diagnosis, this is usually a 6-18 month wait
 - 2) IPRC List – for those with a diagnosis, no waiting period however, an IEP might be developed in the interim. This is re-assessed after a formal IPRC is completed

Q: How soon can you request an IPRC ?

A: No regulations – if a child has a known exceptionality, it can happen right away. Learning Disabilities usually get flagged in academic years.

Q: Is there a timeline in which school the school must perform an IPRC?

A: No legislation but usually in 30 days.

General Comments and Concerns:

- Parents must be informed of their rights – “knowing” how to ask questions re: IPRCs/IEPs
- Parents need to be empowered
- We need to properly fund our schools for special needs equipment/software
- Interpretation is available for IPRC meetings
- When an IEP is in place, it is better to help/collaborate with the teacher understand your child’s needs rather than pointing out a teacher is not following the IEP

Tips for Parents:

- Be reasonable – don’t be angry, ask a lot of questions
- Make accommodations for your child, find alternatives
- Always read the entire document and understand what it means and make sure you agree with what it says
- Take time to think about it – don’t sign at the meeting, take it home and review it
- Advocate for your child – ask what you can do, obtain contact information of professionals who are involved

More Resources from People for Education:



Special Education Tip Sheet for Parents: All students will have times when they struggle with schoolwork or with school life. *But some students may need extra support from a special education program.*

Click on the language of your choice to read the Special Education tip sheet:

[English](#), [Arabic](#), [Chinese](#), [Farsi](#), [Filipino](#), [French](#), [Korean](#),

[Punjabi](#), [Russian](#), [Somali](#), [Spanish](#), [Tamil](#), [Urdu](#).

Or visit **People for Education’s** resource page: <http://www.peopleforeducation.com/parents/specialed>

Teacher Resources can also be very helpful to parents:

“Special Education: A Guide for Educators”, available on-line at:
www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/guide.html

Teachers’ Gateway to Special Education is a new website full of resources: <http://teachspeced.ca/>