

THE IEP

THE FOUNDATION OF YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION:

Ok. This section is... a lot. Like "my brain just quietly left the building" a lot.

And yet – you have to understand it.

SO Caffeinate. Focus. Breathe.

Because what you're about to learn is the foundation of your child's education—potentially all the way to age 22.

Yes. Twenty-two. As in: your child could legally vote, file taxes, and still have an IEP.

Welcome to the club.

THIS IS WHERE YOU STOP BEING "JUST A PARENT" AND BECOME:

- an advocate
- a legal interpreter
- a professional email writer
- a human shield
- and a walking acronym dictionary

The IEP is not just a document. It is a living, breathing, legally binding creature that follows your child through school like an emotional support animal with paperwork.

If you don't understand it, it will absolutely eat you alive. I went in wondering what an IEP was, but I had Doreen (see article).

But once you do? You stop drowning. You start running the room.

I'll try and make it simple, human, and survivable.

THE HEART OF THE IEP: PRESENT LEVELS + GOALS

Everything in the IEP flows from two sections:

1. PRESENT LEVELS (PLAAFP):

PLAAFP stands for Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance. Think of it like this:

PLAAFP is the "snapshot" of your child right now – academically, socially, emotionally, behaviorally, and functionally.

Everything else in the IEP (goals, services, accommodations) must be built from this section. If PLAAFP is wrong, vague, or incomplete, the entire IEP will be wrong.

IT MUST INCLUDE:

- strengths
- challenges
- how the disability affects learning
- data (not opinions)
- parent input

This is where your writing shines — parents can submit a written statement that becomes part of the IEP.

2. THE FIRST GOALS (SMART GOALS):

Goals must be:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Time-bound

They are NOT:

- vague
- behavioral judgments
- academic fantasies
- "try harder" statements