
FACT's Special Education Toolkit



FACT mission: Empower Oregon families experiencing disability in their pursuit of a whole life by expanding awareness, growing community, and equipping families.

Welcome!

Dear parent and/or family member,

Thank you for contacting FACT Oregon!

We are a nonprofit organization working to empower Oregon families experiencing disability in their pursuit of a whole life by expanding awareness, growing community, and equipping families. We are here to help you learn and understand the special education process so that you can be your child's best advocate, as YOU are the one who knows them best!

This toolkit is designed to support you in understanding special education and the very important role you have in determining what it will look like for your student. Whether you want to learn more about the special education process or have a specific concern, the following pages provide necessary information to support you in identifying your to-do list. With this toolkit, we have pulled together what we believe are your most important resources.

After reading this booklet, you are welcome to email and/or call us if you still have questions: support@factoregon.org, (503) 786-6082.

We hope this information will clarify your questions and help you address your concerns. You are not alone in this process! FACT is here to encourage and support you as you navigate the special education process and learn about your critical role.

Sincerely,

Your friends at FACT Oregon

**If you need help reading this booklet or need it in another format,
please call us at (503) 786-6082.**

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Frequently Asked Questions about Special Education [FAQ]

The questions and answers below are just an introduction to special education. You will find much more information on special education in the enclosed booklet, “Understanding Special Education and the IEP Process.” Please read the booklet and all enclosed resources.

What is special education?

Special education means specially designed instruction and other services provided to eligible students with disabilities. Eligibility for special education is determined by testing and information. The special education services a student receives are based on their unique needs, as identified and included in the IEP, not “one-size-fits-all.”

What is an Individualized Education Program [IEP]?

An IEP is a written document created for each student that is eligible for special education. The IEP document describes the child’s strengths and unique needs, parent concerns, goals, special education services, and other important information. A team creates the IEP document during an IEP meeting, and parents are members of the team!

What is “504” or a “504 Plan?”

Students with disabilities may have special protections under a law called Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or “504” for short, whether they qualify for an IEP or not. 504 is a nondiscrimination law and is about “equal access.” Call us if you would like additional information!

What does “parent participation” mean at IEP meetings?

School districts have to invite parents to IEP meetings for their children and work with parents to find a time, date, and location that is convenient for IEP and other important meetings. School districts must ensure that parents are able to understand the process and participate in decisions being made at IEP meetings. Parents can and should provide input at IEP meetings. School districts need to provide interpreters if needed for parents to participate. Translation of vital written documents, like IEPs, may be necessary for meaningful participation.

School districts must make sure parents can participate!

What is my role in my child's IEP?

Parents are experts on their children because parents know them best! Parents are included as members of the IEP team, and like all team members, are able to provide input, share concerns, and participate in all decisions made by the team. IEP teams meet at least annually, but you can request a meeting any time. Parents have a critical role to play in special education, and better parent participation means better outcomes for students!

How do I make sure my voice is heard at meetings? How do I share input?

Remember, parents have a very important role on the team and should be included in all IEP decisions. Also, the IEP document includes a section asking parents to share other ideas and concerns. It is important to bring a written document with your ideas, concerns, and solutions to each IEP meeting. Share your document with the team, and refer back to it often. A sample of written Parent Input and Concerns is on page 9 of this booklet and a template for writing your own is on insert #1.

What if I didn't feel like I could participate in decisions?

Please call our support line, and we will assist you in identifying your next steps and working with your team. We will provide interpretation if you need it. Parents have the right to dispute resolution including mediation, complaints, and due process. We recommend parents call our support line and come to a FACT training to learn more about healthy team dynamics, parent rights, and dispute resolution options.

What if English is my second language?

Parents have the right to a qualified interpreter if one is needed for them to participate in the IEP process. You may request an interpreter using the enclosed template insert #2, Letter of Special Education Requests..

I need my child's IEP translated so I can read it. Will the school translate it?

Many school districts translate IEPs and other documents upon request. If you need educational documents translated for you to understand and participate in your child's special education, you may request translation using the enclosed template insert #2, Letter of Special Education Requests. Please call us if you need help requesting translation.

My child has a disability and is still learning English. Can they still get English language services at school?

Yes. Students who need English language services and special education can receive both. Call our support line if you need more information about this for your child.

How should my child's behavior be addressed?

If your child has behaviors at school that get in the way of their learning or the learning of their classmates, be proactive! Evaluations like a Functional Behavior Assessment [FBA] can help figure out the reason for behaviors, and a Behavior Intervention/Support Plan [BIP/BSP] aims to prevent behaviors through proactive, positive approaches. You can use the enclosed template insert #2, Letter of Special Education Requests to request an FBA and BIP/BSP.

Can my child with a disability be disciplined at school? Suspended? Expelled?

Yes, students with disabilities who are eligible for special education can be disciplined, up to and including suspension and expulsion. However, there are very specific rules around discipline for students with disabilities. If your child is being sent home from school early, suspended, expelled, or disciplined in other ways, please call our support line!

What is Assistive Technology [AT]?

AT means tools and/or devices that help a student with a disability do something they couldn't do without the tool or device. This can mean using a calculator to solve math problems, using special scissors, using a tablet to complete work, and many other options! If you think your child needs AT at school, you can request an AT evaluation using the enclosed template insert #2, Letter of Special Education Requests.

What is Alternative and Augmentative Communication [AAC]?

AAC is about communicating in different ways, like using pictures, buttons, and electronic devices to "talk" to peers and adults. If your child has communication needs, you can request an AAC evaluation and find out what kind of AAC might work for them at school. Call our support line for more information.

Do you still have questions? Take a moment to write them down. After you finish reading this booklet, check back and see if they are answered. Always remember you can call FACT!

Special Education Acronyms

Below you will find some common special education acronyms. You don't need to memorize these, but if you are reading something about your child or special education and see an acronym you don't recognize, look for it here! As always, call us for more information.

AAC	Alternative Augmentative Communication	IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act	IEE	Independent Educational Evaluation
APE	Adaptive Physical Education	IEP	Individualized Education Program
AIM	Accessible Instructional Materials	IFSP	Individualized Family Service Plan
APR	Annual Performance Report	ITP	Individualized Transition Plan
ASL	American Sign Language	LEA	Local Education Agency
AT	Assistive Technology	LEP	Limited English Proficiency
BIP	Behavioral Intervention Plan	LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
BSP	Behavioral Support Plan	MD	Manifestation Determination
CTP	Community Transition Program	OCR	Office of Civil Rights
CCCS	Common Core State Standards	OT	Occupational Therapy
ECSE	Early Childhood Special Education	PECS	Picture Exchange Communication System
EI	Early Intervention	PBIS	Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports
ELL	English Language Learner	PBS	Positive Behavior Supports
ESL	English as a Second Language	PT	Physical Therapy
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act	RS	Related Service
ESY	Extended School Year	RTI	Response to Intervention
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education	SEA	State Education Agency
FBA	Functional Behavior Assessment	SPED	Special Education
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act	SLP	Speech Language Pathologist
IA	Instructional Assistant	VR	Vocational Rehabilitation
IAES	Interim Alternative Education Setting	504	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Written Parent Input Statement

Creating a parent input statement is easy and straightforward when you use an outline approach. (See insert #1)

Opening paragraph:

- ⇒ Start with an “opening” paragraph of a few sentences that is positive, appreciative, and optimistic about the outcomes of the meeting and leads to the strengths section.

Strengths:

- ⇒ Include some of your child’s strengths and things you see at home. (A one-page profile can be helpful in completing this section. See pages 10-11)
- ⇒ List activities that your child enjoys, is good at, or is involved in (i.e., success in community activities; successful inclusion in community activities with non-disabled peers and others).
- ⇒ Also include strengths that you’ve seen in your child around school. (For example, did they master a new routine, learn a new skill, love to read, etc.?)

Concerns:

- ⇒ This is where to list your concerns. It’s important to be brief and specific.
- ⇒ Look for themes in your concerns and try to word a few sentences that will address that theme. (Ex., “Transition warnings need to be addressed...” instead of “He’s melting down at recess because you didn’t tell him it was over...” or “He’s not going to lunch because he didn’t know...”)
- ⇒ Be constructive; don’t use specific names of teachers or assistants.
- ⇒ Be thoughtful in how you describe your concerns about your child. You want to be as strength-based as possible. (Ex., “Would like the team to identify how it will provide bathroom prompts for independent toileting” instead of “He isn’t potty trained.”)

Remedies:

- ⇒ This is your opportunity to show that you want to work toward solutions and that you understand your role on the IEP team. Parents know their child best, and often have ideas that work at home or in the community. This is your opportunity to share them with the IEP team.

Closing sentence:

- ⇒ A sentence or two emphasizing working together as a team and your optimism for successful development and implementation of your child’s IEP.

Parent Input Example

Date

IEP Team,

(Opening Paragraph) We look forward to working with the team to create a rigorous education program for Sam, and provide him with the stepping stones to: receive a diploma, attend a post-secondary college program, live independently at age 22, be employed, and access his community.

Strengths:

- Smart: he has a great memory and loves to learn
- Engages with peers
- Enjoys books, reading, sports, and music
- Excellent computer skills
- Able to independently navigate the school

Concerns:

We are concerned that we are not utilizing assistive technology to support Sam's progress.

We are concerned that there is not an adequate home/school communication system.

We are concerned that we are not utilizing Sam's behavior supports causing unnecessary outbursts and consequences.

Remedies:

We believe consultation by the assistive technology specialist will provide information on to use Sam's laptop successfully while in class.

We would like to duplicate the home/school communication log we used last year to communicate between home and school.

We believe that by ensuring that all staff is trained on Sam's behavior support plan, including his need for transitional warnings, Sam will demonstrate the appropriate behavior we are looking for.

(Closing Sentence) We look forward to working as a team toward a successful year for Sam, collaborating for great progress on his educational goals.

The Smiths

One-page Person-centered Profile

Creating a one-page, person-centered profile is an amazing way to introduce your child to the IEP team. (See insert #3)

Things you will want to include:

Strengths, Gifts, and Capacities

- Strength: Something your child is good at (example: using a computer)
- Gift: Something that comes to your child naturally (example: athletic)
- Capacity: Something your child is capable of (example: getting dressed)

What Works

Review the example on page 11 to help you identify what works for your child. Consider a good day. Ask yourself, “What makes it a good day for my child?”

What Doesn't Work

Now look at what doesn't work for your child. Think about a challenging day. What occurs that causes the challenges?

Your Vision or Dreams for Your Child's Future

What do you envision their life will be like (example: graduating with a diploma or having a competitive wage job)?

The next page shows just one of the many ways you can create a one-page profile. We've included some templates with the toolkit for you to handwrite the information. We also have samples, examples, and templates available to download on our website (www.factoregon.org). More information is found in our booklet, “Understanding Special Education and the IEP Process.”

If you haven't attended FACT's “It Starts With a Dream Training: Introduction to the One-page Person-centered Profile,” check our calendar for an upcoming training.

Strengths/Gifts/Capacities



- Smart-he's a learner
- Great Sense of Humor
- Loves books
- Empathetic
- Very determined
- Able to use computer by himself!
- Has strong opinions
- Very visual learner
- Problem Solver
- Independent
- Very physical - athletic

What Works



- Sports!
- Technology
- Clear, concise directions
- Time to process
- Choices
- High Expectations
- Learning from typical peers
- Opportunities to try on his own
- Keeping hands busy when sitting
- Calm Counter App
- Visuals
- Friends

What Doesn't Work



- Chaos—Yelling
- Hovering
- Being bored
- Low expectations
- Too many verbal directions
- No sensory breaks

Vision / Hopes / Dreams

- Lots of friends
- Graduating high school with a diploma
- Competitive employment with benefits
- Have a house



Template Request Letter

We have included a template letter that you can fill in and submit to your child's school to make requests related to special education. (See insert #2) Below are explanations of each type of request. If you aren't sure whether you need to send a letter of request to your child's team, or you have questions about this process, please call us!

You only need to use this letter if you or your child has a need that is not being met, you think they need an evaluation, or you would like to schedule a meeting.

Schedule an IEP meeting

- ⇒ Your child's needs have changed, and the IEP needs to be updated or changed
- ⇒ You want to discuss a different placement
- ⇒ You have concerns about your child's IEP or services, and want to discuss solutions

Schedule a meeting with a teacher or other person - NOT a formal IEP meeting

- ⇒ You want to check in with a team member, but don't need to change your child's IEP

Request an interpreter

- ⇒ Your native language is not English, and you need an interpreter in order to understand and participate in meetings
- ⇒ You are deaf or hard of hearing, and need an American Sign Language interpreter

Request a Translation of the IEP

- ⇒ Your native language is not English, and you need a copy of your child's IEP in your native language in order to meaningfully participate on the IEP team

Request evaluations for special education

- ⇒ Your child doesn't have an IEP, and you think they need one

Request additional evaluations

- ⇒ Your child has an IEP, but you think they have a different disability and have other needs that are not being met

Request an Independent Educational Evaluation

- ⇒ Your child had an evaluation done at school less than one year ago; you disagree with the results, and want an independent tester to repeat the evaluation

Request a Functional Behavior Assessment

- ⇒ Your child experiences behaviors at school that get in the way of their learning or the learning of other students

Request an Assistive Technology evaluation

- ⇒ You think your child needs assistive technology to succeed at school

Conduct an Augmentative Communication evaluation

- ⇒ Your child has communication needs or delays, or has been called “nonverbal,” and you want to explore other ways for them to communicate at school

Consider a 504 plan

- ⇒ You think your child has a disability as defined in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and needs accommodations to access school/school work

Keep copies of your child’s records!

Start a file at home.

Special Education Action Steps: What's Next?

Now that you have read through this toolkit and explored its content and the partner booklet, "Understanding Special Education and the IEP Process," you are probably wondering what to do next! We know it is an overwhelming process, but FACT is here to support you. ***Use this checklist to help with the process!***

If you are unsure if your child has an IEP:

- Contact your child's teacher or the district's office of special education to find out. FACT's support line can help you find contact information.

If your child doesn't have an IEP, but you believe they need special education:

- You may request evaluations in all areas of suspected disability. You can use the enclosed template insert #2, Letter of Special Education Requests to make a formal request.

If your child is already receiving special education and has an IEP:

- Request a copy of your child's IEP if you do not already have one. You may use the enclosed template insert #2, Letter of Special Education Requests to make this request.
- Read your child's current IEP and get familiar with it.
- Create a one-page profile for your child! Include what works for them and what doesn't work. Include your child's hopes, dreams, and interests. You can use the enclosed template insert #3 to create this by hand or use a computer.
- Write a parent input statement. You can use the enclosed template insert #1, Parent Input and Concerns to handwrite it or use a computer. Include suggestions and changes you feel are appropriate for your child's education. (See example on page 9)
- Prepare for your child's annual IEP meeting, or request a meeting if needed. Make this request in writing using the enclosed template insert #2, Letter of Special Education Requests and turning it in by hand or by emailing it.



FACT is your one-stop resource!

We are able to support you with:

- *Understanding special education*
- *Trainings, workshops, and in-services*
- *Family activities and get-togethers*
- *Person-centered planning tools*
- *Information and resources*
- *A support line to answer your questions*

FACT Support Line:

(503) 786-6082 or 1 (888) 988-3228

Via email support@factoregon.org

www.factoregon.org



Parent Input and Concerns for:

(Child's Name)

Date:

IEP Team,

I/We look forward to working with the team on our child's IEP. Please include our parent input and concerns in the IEP as written.

Strengths:

-
-
-
-
-

Concerns:

-
-
-
-
-

Remedies:

-
-
-
-
-

Sincerely,

(Parent/Guardian's Name)

Date:

Dear Team,

My child attends school at _____ and is in the ____ grade. With this letter, I am respectfully making requests that I believe are appropriate for my child's education. Please see below:

- Schedule an IEP meeting or Schedule a meeting with:

- The best dates for me/us are _____
- Provide a qualified interpreter in order for me to have meaningful participation in meetings.
Provide me a copy of my child's IEP in the language I read which is _____ . I need this to have meaningful participation in my child's education.
- Conduct all necessary evaluations/assessments to determine if my child qualifies for Special Education Services based on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004).
- My child is eligible for special education under the category of _____ but I believe he/she needs to be evaluated to determine services needed in the area of _____.
- I would like to request an Independent Educational Evaluation at public expense, because I disagree with the District's evaluation in the area of _____ conducted on _____. Please send me a copy of the written criteria for independent evaluations. Please include a written list of independent evaluators I may consider.
- Please conduct a Functional Behavior Assessment with my input to inform development of a Positive Behavior Support/Intervention Plan.
- Please conduct an Assistive Technology evaluation for my child
- Please conduct an Augmentative Communication evaluation for my child.
- Please consider our child for an accommodation plan pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Thank you for your support and commitment to my child's education. I look forward to hearing from you soon and continuing to work together. Please respond to this letter within 10 school days to provide notice of your decision, and consent forms if applicable.

Thank you in advance for your collaborative efforts to provide our child with a quality education!

Respectively,

My phone number is:

My email address is:

My mailing address is:

***Hopes, Dreams, and
Expectations for***

A Person-centered Profile

All About Me

A Person Centered Profile

Insert #3

Strengths/Gifts/



What Works



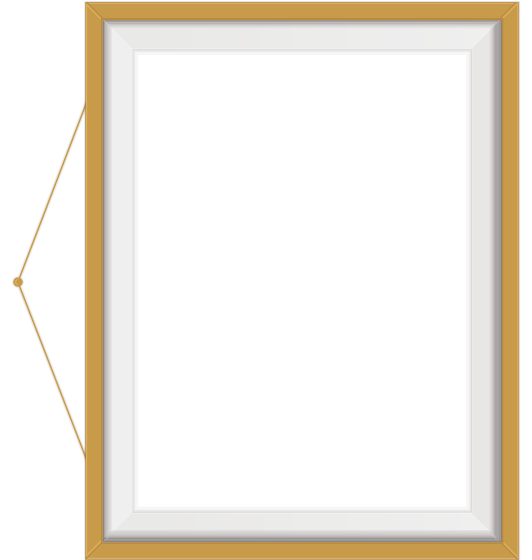
What Doesn't Work



All About Me

ABOUT ME AND MY VISION STATEMENT

STRENGTHS & ATTRIBUTES



THINGS I'M WORKING ON

HOW BEST TO SUPPORT ME

WHAT DOESN'T WORK