

TERA'S TOP TIPS FOR PARENTS

Are you feeling overwhelmed, confused and tired of trying to navigate the Special Education maze? Below are my top tips to help get you ready and feel like a pro.

You are the expert on your child!

You know your student better than anyone else, do not let anyone try to tell you otherwise. Your thoughts and ideas need to be heard and valued as much or more than any other person on the team.

It is ok to not know what you do not know.

There are others on the team that are experts in all the fields that prove valuable to your student. Let them share their expertise on those subjects and resources. Flatter them with sincere admiration for their training and skill. Refer to them often and seek their expertise.

Keep the focus on your student.

Resist the temptation to compare, either yourself or your student to anyone else. Sure, there are others that have the same diagnosis but there is only one student that is yours. Also, while the professionals on the team have worked with others, you are there to talk about your student and their needs.

Ask for definitions of frequently used terms as it relates to the topic at hand.

Do not be afraid or intimidated to ask for someone on the team to repeat or define what they are talking about. Ask members of the team to avoid talking over you by using abbreviations and acronyms from their field of expertise. Speak in terms that you understand.

Visit your State Department of Education Website for the latest training and resources available.

Every state is different. Be sure to go to the state website and see what is offered for your child in regards to Special Education. Check the website for School Choice options and resources and visit American Federation for Children website to see what Choice options are available in your state.

Make a list of your child's strengths and weaknesses.

Review the blessings of your child frequently! This can often seem like a challenging and lonely journey, by reviewing their gifts you will stay motivated.

Write it down, all of it!!

Remember, if it isn't written down, it never happened. Make sure to keep a log of all phone calls: Who, What, Where and When. I suggest a notebook and take it with you every time you have a meeting or talk to someone about your child. You will be so thankful that you did.

Evaluate and re-evaluate if necessary.

When it is expected that your student needs help, put in writing that you want your student to be tested. Talk to your child's teachers and ask who will be evaluating them. Ask, ask and ask some more. You have rights if you are in the public school and you want to have them lead your team, ask them to present your rights to you. It is the law for public education. Most school choice options require you to start at your public school so be kind, yet persistent.

Breathe!!

Take time for yourself, talk to a friend and know that all the information can get overwhelming. Taking the time to reach out and gather necessary information, already means you are a great parent doing the best you can to help your student in need. Celebrate your efforts so you can get back in the game!

Never, never give up.

You will get tired and want to throw in the towel, do not. Your child is counting on you to be the driving force to help them be the best they were designed to be. You can do this and there are people out there to help you. Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it.

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