



Advocating For Your Child In Special Education

**Ward 15 Special Education Parent Forum
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equality

equality = SAMENESS

Equality is about SAMENESS, it promotes fairness and justice by giving everyone the same thing.

BUT it can only work IF everyone starts from the SAME place, in this example equality only works if everyone is the same height.

equity

Equity = FAIRNESS

EQUITY is about FAIRNESS, it's about making sure people get access to the same opportunities.

Sometimes our differences and/or history, can create barriers to participation, so we must FIRST ensure EQUITY before we can enjoy equality.



Definition of Advocacy by Herbert & Mould:

“Advocacy is intervention when needed services are not accessible; are not available; are not appropriate; or when the voice of a child is not being heard.”

When do we advocate?

- Conversation
- Note
- Letter
- Report Card Meeting
- Requested Meeting
- SST Meeting
- IPRC Meeting

Break the Process Down Into Small and Manageable Steps

1. **Understand the problem**
2. **Describe what you want, what you don't want, and why**
3. **Do some research**
4. **Prepare for the meeting**
5. **Discuss-Request-Listen-Counter-Clarify**
6. **Follow up**



Step 1:

Understand the Problem

Step 1: Understand the Problem

- What do you think the problem is?
- What is your child experiencing?
- What challenges are staff facing?
- How do the other students feel?
- How long has the problem been going on?
- Is the problem occurring in other places, at other times, with other people?
- What has been done to address the problem already?



Step 2:

Describe what you want,
what you don't want,
and why

What do you want?

- Physical support

- Academic support

- Emotional

support

- Social support

- Change

- Done better

- Consistency

- Understanding

- Communication

- Stop to Bullying

- Workload

- Homework

- Different priorities


- Friendships

- Focus on what your child's interests

- Unreasonable expectation

- What don't you want

- What are you trying to avoid




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|----------------------------------|--|
| What? | Write down what you want for your child. |
| Why? | |
| Request: | |
| Support: | |
| Solution Suggestions: | |

WHY

How will changes make the student more successful?

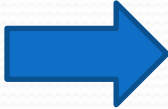
What is the long term benefit? Who will benefit?

- **Support learning**
- **Achieve IEP goals faster**
- **Gain independence**
- **Equality**
- **Equity**
- **Dignity**
- **Reinforcement**
- **Structure**
- **Age or skill appropriate**
- **Relevance**
- **Consistency**
- **Other**



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| What? | |
| Why? | Explain why you want this to be done. |
| Request: | |
| Support: | |
| Solution Suggestions: | |

Change Your Language

- I want...
 - You need to...
 - Talk about wrong
 - Negatives
 - He/she did this wrong...
 - Focus on disability
 - Vague commitments
 - Conversations
- 
- How can we...
 - What can be done to...
 - Talk about working to success
 - Goals for change
 - Talk about strengths
 - How can we help him/her improve...
 - Assign tasks and deadlines
 - Documentation

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| What? | |
| Why? | |
| Request: | Create a sentence asking for what you want using positive words, a team focus, and successful language. |
| Support: | |
| Solution Suggestions: | |



Step 3:
Do some research

Policies, Hot Topics, and Directives

Do some research and find something to support your request.

- PPM
- Hot Topics
- School mission statements
- What's in the news
- TDSB Roles and Responsibilities
- IEP
- Network of friends, websites, organizations, etc.

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| What? | |
| Why? | |
| Request: | |
| Support: | What can you find to support your request? |
| Solution Suggestions: | |

Prepare for the NO

- **Be prepared to hear that your request has been denied**
- **Come up with some temporary or alternate solutions (counter-offer)**
- **Practice saying some discussion-continuing phrases**
 - “What else we do to address this problem?”
 - “Are there any ideas we haven’t discussed yet?”
 - “Is there someone else we can meet with to resolve this issue?”
 - “What have other people/classes/schools done in similar situations?”
- **Learn what the chain of command is and who to escalate the problem to should the meeting not have a reasonable outcome**

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| What? | |
| Why? | |
| Request: | |
| Support: | |
| Solution Suggestions: | Temporary solutions, alternative solutions, creative ideas, brainstorming. |

Setting Your Priorities

| URGENT | IMPORTANT | FUTURE GOAL |
|--------|-----------|-------------|
| | | |



Step 4:
Prepare for the Meeting

PREPARE FOR A MEETING

```
graph TD; A[PREPARE FOR A MEETING] --> B[Intellectual  
Understand the issue  
Know what you want  
Know the rules  
Know who to ask]; A --> C[Organizational  
Have your documents  
Be ready to take notes  
Written questions]; A --> D[Physical  
Arrive on time  
No distractions  
Prepare to stay late]; A --> E[Emotional  
Bring support];
```

Intellectual

Understand the issue
Know what you want
Know the rules
Know who to ask

Organizational

Have your documents
Be ready to take notes
Written questions

Physical

Arrive on time
No distractions
Prepare to stay late

Emotional

Bring support



Step 5:

Discuss-Request-Listen-
Counter-Clarify

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- **Start the meeting with a positive mindset and friendly attitude**
- **Discuss the issue together, share your concerns, ask questions**
- **Make your request, explain why, add supporting information (from worksheet)**
- **Listen to what they have to say**
- **If needed, make your counter offer (temporary or alternate solutions)**
- **Set action steps, assign them, set deadlines**
- **Get more details right away**
 - **What is being done?**
 - **What is the process?**
 - **Who does what step?**
 - **When will the solution start?**
 - **How long will the solution last?**
 - **Set deadlines and make sure you have the right contact information.**
 - **Where will it happen?**
 - **Set a date and time to meet again, if needed.**



Step 6: Follow up

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- **Show gratitude and appreciation**
- **Summarize the meeting and action steps and email it to participants**
- **Follow each of the action steps to make sure they are being done on time, and if a deadline has been missed, politely follow up**
- **Continue to be involved**

Tips For Good Advocating

(what I have learned from copying successful parents)

- Be persistent and consistent
- Be kind, polite and respectful
- Don't wait until the last minute
- Ask questions
- Show up for meetings on time, be ready and organized
- Speak up during meetings, ask questions, and take notes
- Read all notes, letters, and reports
- Network with other parents
- Bring your ideas to the conversation

Tips For Good Advocating

(what I have learned from copying successful parents)

- Don't sign anything right away, take it home and think about it
- Don't sign if you don't understand
- Ask for help
- Document everything – names, dates, times, content, action steps
- Show gratitude
- Follow the chain of command
- Be open to new ideas, be flexible and be fair
- Have all the information



Questions?

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Thank You