Preparing for Kindergarten: A Checklist for Parents

Preparing for transition to Kindergarten-

✓ **Contact your school district for information on kindergarten registration procedures and requirements and to find out when kindergarten registration will be held.**
- Contact your school district by the beginning of January of the year your child will enter kindergarten. School districts often post kindergarten registration information on their web sites.
- Your district may require that you complete the kindergarten registration process even if your child is currently receiving special education preschool services.
- For Kindergarten registration, school districts require that you provide your child's original birth certificate, documents proving that you live within district boundaries, and proof that your child's immunizations are up to date.

✓ **Many schools hold a spring open house. It is a great time to visit a school with your child.**
- At an open house, families can visit the classrooms, meet teachers, and see examples of students' work.
- Check elementary school calendars and newsletters for open house announcements, or call schools.
- Even if you don't know which school your child will attend, a visit to your neighborhood school during an open house can provide information that may be useful to you when the IEP team discusses your child's kindergarten placement.

Preparing to discuss transition to kindergarten at your child's IEP meeting:

✓ **Request copies of all preschool progress reports, assessments, evaluations, and teacher narratives about your child. It is good practice to make all requests in writing (by letter or email).**
- Your child may be assessed during transition to kindergarten to determine if he or she is still in need of special education and services.
- You may also want to get copies of medical reports related to your child's special needs.
- Ask questions about any educational or medical reports you do not understand or do not agree with.
- Compile a notebook of all your child's records including doctors' reports, teachers reports, diagnostic evaluations, immunization records, and previous IEPs. Contact the Exceptional Children's Assistance Center (ECAC) for notebook resources and information on how to compile and organize a notebook.

✓ **Gather information that will help you understand and evaluate various kindergarten placement options when they are discussed by the IEP team.**
- The following questions may be useful starting points for gathering more information:
  1. If my child is placed in a general education classroom, what types of special education services and supports will be available and how might those services and supports be provided?
  2. If my child is placed in a special education class, what types of special education services and supports will be available? How will my child have opportunities to interact with peers in general education classes?
- Talk to your child's teachers, services providers, and district program specialists. Let them know that you are trying to become familiar with the kinds of placements that IEP team might consider and that you are not "shopping" for a particular program.

Turn over to find a summary of parents' rights under the IDEA Law (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004).

A Summary of Some Parents' Rights under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004)

❖ Parents have the right to review and obtain copies of all of their child's school records, assessments, and reports. You should request copies be given to you before the IEP meeting for you to review.

❖ Parents have the right to be notified in writing before the IEP meeting of the date and time of the meeting and who will attend. You may request an IEP meeting be rescheduled if you or someone who you want to have accompany you to the meeting are unable to attend on the date and time suggested by the school district.

❖ Parents have the right to invite anyone to attend the IEP meeting who has knowledge or expertise regarding their child (for example, an expert, friend, relative, advocate, lawyer). You must notify the school district in advance of who will be in attendance.

❖ In general, anyone who attends the IEP meeting must have knowledge of the child or programs and services that may be recommended for the child. You should make sure that someone who represents and can act on behalf of the district administration in the IEP process will attend the meeting.

❖ Parents may tape record the IEP meeting as long as they notify the school district at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting.

❖ Parents are equal participants with the school district in developing the IEP. You may give input on your views of your child's strengths, weaknesses, and educational needs. You may write goals and objectives for the IEP and/or suggest changes in goals and objectives written by your IEP team.

❖ Parents may request that the IEP clearly specify types, amounts, duration, and frequency of services. You may request that vague terms like "small group" be clearly defined (for example, you might request that "small group" be defined as 3 or fewer children).

❖ Parental consent is required before the district may implement the IEP. You do not have to give your consent to the IEP at the IEP meeting. You may sign that you are "in attendance" and request a complete copy of the IEP document to take home and review. You do not have to consent to the entire IEP. You can approve parts of the IEP and identify (in writing) items that are not resolved and will be followed up at another meeting.

❖ When the IEP is signed by the parents and school district, it is a legal document. The district must provide the programs and services as specified in the IEP, and the district may not change the services or your child's placement without an IEP meeting to modify the existing IEP.

❖ IEP meetings must be held at least once a year. You have the right to request an IEP meeting by held whenever you think it is necessary to discuss your child's progress, programs, or services.