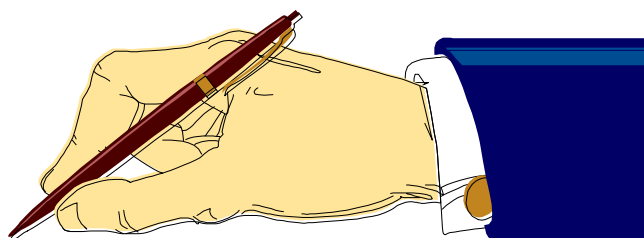


Revised September 2019

Building Communication Through Letter Writing



**OHIO COALITION FOR THE EDUCATION
OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

The Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities (OCECD) is a statewide, nonprofit organization that serves families of infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities in Ohio, and agencies who provide services to them. OCECD works through the coalition efforts of more than 35 parent and professional disability organizations which comprise the Coalition.

Established in 1972 and staffed primarily by parents of children and adults with disabilities, persons with disabilities, and education professionals, the Coalition's mission is to ensure that every Ohio child with special needs receives a free, appropriate, public education in the least restrictive environment to enable that child to reach his/her highest potential. Throughout Ohio, the Coalition's services reach families of children and youth, birth through twenty-six, with all disabilities.

OCECD's programs help parents become informed and effective representatives for their children in all educational settings. In addition, youth are assisted to advocate for themselves. Through knowledge about laws, resources, rights and responsibilities, families are better able to work with agencies to ensure that appropriate services are received for the benefit of their sons and daughters.



**OHIO COALITION FOR THE EDUCATION OF
CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

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MARION, OHIO 43302-3741
(740) 382-5452 • (844) 382-5452 (Toll Free)
(740) 383-6421 (Fax) • www.ocecd.org**

Download the free mobile barcode reader on your smartphone at **www.i-nigma.com** and scan this barcode to visit our website instantly and get more information about OCECD.



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INTRODUCTION

This booklet has been developed in hopes that it may aid in keeping communication open and focused between families and schools. As a guide for structure and appropriate content, we hope it will enable you to become more comfortable with letter writing.

Building communication between you and the school staff through letters offers a way of keeping records of ideas, concerns, and suggestions. Putting your thoughts on paper gives you the opportunity to take as long as you need to state your concerns specifically, to think over what you've written, to make changes, and perhaps to have someone else read over the letter and make suggestions. Letters also give all the people involved with your child's education the opportunity to go over what's been "said" several times. A lot of confusion and misunderstanding can be avoided by writing down thoughts and ideas.

In this booklet you will find general guidelines to writing letters as well as sample letters to address various educational needs.

THE POWER OF
Writing

LETTER WRITING TIPS

Letter Content

- Place the date you write your letter at the top of the page.
- Address your letter to whom you are expressing your concern or making your request.
- Make sure you are spelling the person's name correctly and using their correct title.
- Be sure to have the correct mailing address.
- Before you begin writing, ask yourself this question: "Why am I writing this letter?"
- Be sure to give your child's full name and current class placement.
- State specifically what your concerns are.
- State the facts briefly, describing situations without expressing anger, frustration, blame, or other negative emotions.
- Be sure there is a question or request in the letter so that the person to whom you are writing can answer.
- State what you want rather than what you don't want.
- State what kind of response you would like: a letter, a meeting, a phone call, etc.
- Be sure to give an address and/or daytime phone number where you can be reached.
- You may give a specific date or time frame by which you would like to receive a response, especially if your previous requests have gone unanswered.
- Remember to request an interpreter if you or your child will have that need at a meeting.
- Always end your letter with a "thank you."
- If you send a copy of your letter to other individuals, be sure to indicate this at the bottom of the page under your signature.
(cc: name(s) of those copied)

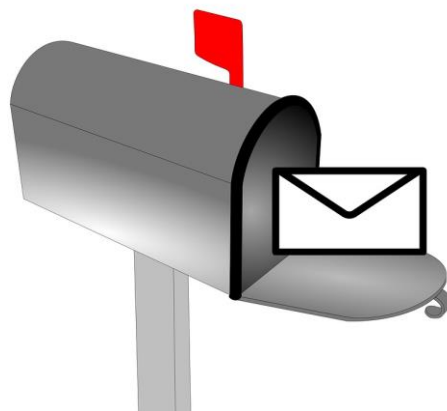
Editing your Letter

- After you write the first draft of your letter, put it aside for a day or two. Take the letter back out and review it with fresh eyes.

- Read your letter as though you are the person receiving it. Is your request clear? Have you included the important facts? Have you kept your letter brief, saving detailed information for a face-to-face meeting? Is the tone of your letter pleasant and businesslike?
- Have an impartial person read your letter. Is your reason for writing clear to them? Will the recipient understand your request and respond positively?
- Is your letter free from grammar and spelling errors? Be sure to use spell check and grammar check on the computer.

Finalizing and Delivering your Letter

- Send your letter Certified Mail when you need to assure the person received your letter, or when you need to document the date it was received. You will receive a signed receipt when you use Certified Mail.
- Hand deliver your letter to the school office. Ask the school secretary to date stamp and sign your copy of the letter to verify delivery.
- If you e-mail or fax any of your letters, always follow up by mailing a copy of the letter to the individual.



WRITING TO DISCUSS A PROBLEM OR EXPRESS YOUR CONCERNS

Sometimes your child may have a particular problem at school. You may have talked to your child's teacher about this concern. The two of you may have written notes back and forth or talked on the phone. If it seems as if your concern is still not resolved, then you may want to write a formal letter. Perhaps the informal communication has not been as clear as you think. Maybe you feel that the seriousness of your concern is not fully understood. By writing a letter, the school will learn that you consider the matter to be important and needs to be addressed.

You can write about any concern - an IEP issue, a general education issue, about your child being bullied, or the need to help your child develop social skills or improve behavior. Any school problem is worth writing about if it is having a negative impact on your child and you need the school's assistance to resolve it.

Note: The "cc:" at the bottom of the letter means you are sending a copy of your letter to the people listed after the "cc". If you write to the Director of Special Education about a problem at your child's school, you should copy the principal. If you write to the principal about a problem, you should copy your child's teacher or other staff involved with your child.



WRITING TO DISCUSS A PROBLEM

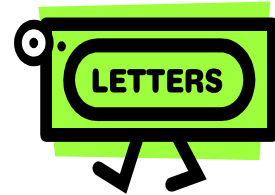
Date (include month, day, year)

Name of Principal

Name of School

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code



Dear (Principal's name):

In this paragraph say who you are, give your child's full name, and his or her current class placement. Say something positive about your child's situation here, before you state your reason for writing.

BRIEFLY, explain why you are writing. Give relevant history and facts that support your concerns. (For example, your 3rd grader is struggling in school and you want to ask for help. You might say that your child's grades have been getting worse throughout the year. That fact is relevant. Talking about something that happened a long time ago probably is not likely to be helpful.)

In this paragraph, state what you would like to have happen or what you would like to see changed. You may BRIEFLY say what you would not like, or what has been tried and not worked. However, spend most of this paragraph explaining what you want.

Say what type of response you would prefer. For instance, do you need to meet with someone, do you want a return letter, or a phone call?

Finally, give your daytime phone number and email address and state that you look forward to hearing from the person soon or give a date ("Please respond by the 15th"). End the letter with, "Thank you for your attention to this matter."

Sincerely,

Your Name

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

cc: Your child's teacher

WRITING TO DISCUSS YOUR CHILD BEING BULLIED

It can be very distressing to find that your child has become a target of bullying and it is important to immediately notify the school district. Although a telephone call to the principal may be your first step, you should always follow-up with written notification.

At the present time, there is no federal law that specifically addresses bullying. However, when bullying overlaps with discriminatory harassment and is based on race, national origin, color, sex, age, disability or religion, it may breach federal civil rights laws. School districts must investigate and stop any incidents of bullying. They also are required to take steps to make sure it does not recur.

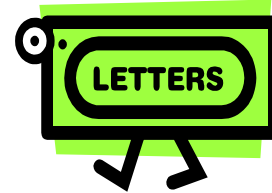
Legislation has been passed in the State of Ohio that requires all school districts to have a policy which defines and prohibits harassment, intimidation, and bullying. The district is required to publish this policy in the handbook every year. You may find the district's bullying policy on the school district's website.



WRITING TO DISCUSS YOUR CHILD BEING BULLIED

Date (include month, day, year)

Name of Principal
Name of School
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code



Dear (Principal's name):

In this paragraph say who you are, give your child's full name, and his or her current class placement.

BRIEFLY, explain why you are writing. Give relevant history and facts that support your problem and your concerns. (For example, your child is being bullied at lunch. You might say that your child's food is being taken from them, or on recess your child is being intimidated by other children threatening to hit or kick them.) Remember to state only facts. What is important is listing the action of bullying, the times it happens and who is involved.

In this paragraph, state what you would like to have happen, or what you would like to see changed. If your child has an IEP, you may want to request an IEP meeting. You also may BRIEFLY say what you would not like, or what has been tried and not worked. However, spend most of this paragraph explaining what you want.

Say the type of response you would prefer. For instance, do you need to schedule a meeting, do you want a return letter, or a phone call?

Finally give your daytime telephone number and state that you look forward to hearing from the person soon, or give a date. ("Please respond by the 15th"). End the letter with, "Thank you for your attention to this matter."

Sincerely,

Your Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

cc: Your child's teacher

REQUESTING AN INITIAL EVALUATION TO DETERMINE IF YOUR CHILD IS ELIGIBLE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

If your child has been consistently struggling in school, and the school has tried to respond to your child's problems through several interventions without success, your child may have a disability. The purpose of the evaluation is to see if your child has a disability and needs special education services. This evaluation is free of charge.

If the school personnel think your child may have a disability, they must initiate the evaluation by contacting you to request your written permission for your child to be evaluated. You also have the right to request an evaluation. The school district must respond to your request for an evaluation within 30 days. However, the school does not have to perform the evaluation just because you ask for one. If the school district refuses to evaluate your child, they must notify you of this decision in writing in a "Prior Written Notice", giving the reasons why they refused.

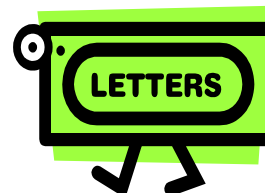
If you want the school to perform an evaluation, you should specifically tell the school in your letter that you are giving your consent for testing. If your child has been identified by your doctor or other professionals as having a disability, you will want to include this information in your letter to the school. You should also provide copies of any reports you have received that explain your child's condition.

If you decide to write the school and ask that your child be evaluated, the letter on the next page gives an example of what you may want to say.

**REQUESTING AN INITIAL EVALUATION TO
DETERMINE IF YOUR CHILD QUALIFIES FOR
SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES**

Date (include month, day and year)

Name of Principal
Name of School
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code



Dear (Principal's Name):

I am writing to request that my son/daughter, (child's name), be evaluated for special education and related services. I am concerned that (child's name) is having problems in school and believe he/she may need special services in order to learn. (Child's name) is in the () grade at (name of school). (Teacher's name) is his/her teacher.

Specifically, I am concerned because (child's name) does/does not (give a few direct examples of your child's problems at school).

We have tried the following to help (child's name): (If you or the school have done anything extra to help your child, briefly state it here).

This letter serves as my request and consent for an evaluation of my child. Please provide me the name and telephone number of the person who will be forwarded this letter and who will be coordinating the evaluation. You can send me the information or call me during the day at (daytime telephone number).

Thank you for your prompt attention to my request. I would appreciate scheduling a meeting to discuss my concerns and to fill out a planning form for the evaluation. My daytime telephone number is (give your phone number). My email address is (give your email address).

Sincerely,

Your Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip
Code

Note: If you have made numerous requests for an evaluation without a response, consider including a time frame by which you would like the school district to respond. (I look forward to hearing from you within five school days of the date you receive this letter.)

If your child has been identified with a disability by professionals outside the school, add the following to the first paragraph above:
(Child's name) has been identified as having (name of disability) by (name of professional). Enclosed is a copy of the report(s) I have received that explains (child's name) condition.

REQUESTING ADDITIONAL TESTING IN A PARTICULAR AREA

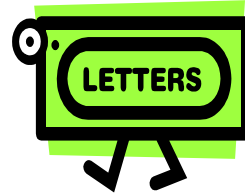
The school has assessed your child with a complete evaluation. You have participated as a team member to help determine your child's eligibility for special education services and have contributed suggestions for interventions and strategies to your child's education.

If you feel that the results in specific areas of the testing have not adequately evaluated those areas of need or suspected disability, you may request further testing be done in those specific areas.



REQUESTING ADDITIONAL TESTING

Date (include month, day, and year)



Name of Principal
Name of School
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear (Principal's Name):

I am the parent of (name of child). I have studied the reports of the school district's evaluation of my child and feel that (he/she) was not evaluated in every area related to the suspected disability. I believe additional testing is needed in the area of (list area(s) needing further testing). Please tell me in writing who will be performing the additional testing, when the testing will take place, and what tests will be administered to my (son/daughter).

Thank you for your prompt attention to my request. I would appreciate hearing from you by (date). My daytime telephone number is (give your phone number). My email address is (give your email address).

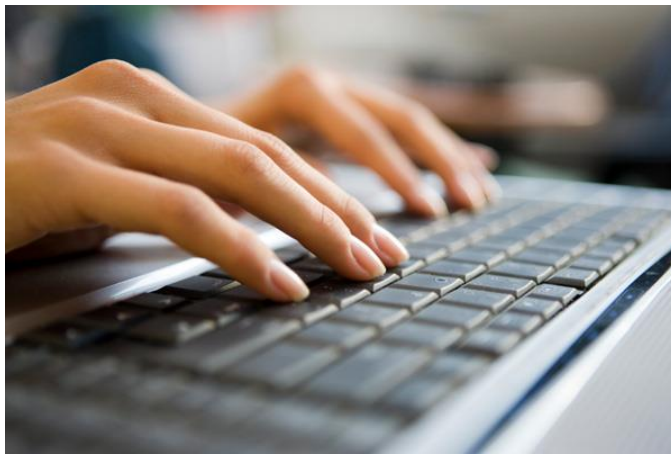
Sincerely,

Your Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

REQUESTING A REEVALUATION FOR YOUR CHILD

If your child is already receiving special education services, a reevaluation must be discussed by the IEP team at least every three (3) years.

An evaluation is considered to be current if it is within one year old. A school district or parent may request a reevaluation to occur more often than every three (3) years if needed. For example: New information is needed if the IEP services are not helping the child to be successful, and you and the school want to see if there have been any changes in your child's condition. You, the parent, are not required to give your consent for an *early* reevaluation if you believe that no new information is needed. If you do not consent, the school cannot proceed without a due process hearing.



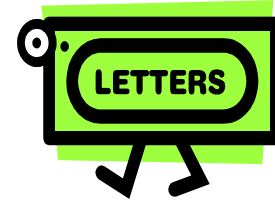
REQUESTING A REEVALUATION FOR YOUR CHILD

Date (include month, day and year)

Name of Principal

Name of School

Full Address of School



Dear (Name of Principal):

I am the parent of (child's name), who has a disability, and is in the (____) grade at (name of school), in (teacher's name) class.

(Use this paragraph if it is appropriate.)

Due to changes or concerns (Briefly state what the changes or your concerns are - Examples: changes in medication, your child's medical needs, a burst in development, etc.), I am requesting a reevaluation be given to my child. The date of (child's name) last evaluation was (give month, day and year of the last evaluation).

(Use this paragraph if it is appropriate.)

It is my understanding that under IDEA 2004 the IEP team must convene every three years to determine the need for a reevaluation. The date of (child's name) last evaluation was (give month, day and year of the last evaluation). I am requesting the IEP team be convened to discuss this reevaluation.

Thank you for your prompt attention to my request. I may be reached at (your daytime phone number). My email address is (give your email address).

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely.

Your Name

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

cc: Special education director

Your child's teacher

REQUESTING AN INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION (IEE) AT PUBLIC EXPENSE

IDEA 2004 gives you the right to have your child evaluated independently. This means you have the right to have your child evaluated by someone other than school employees. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine whether your child has a disability, and, if so, determine his or her special needs. In some cases, you may pay for an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE). In other cases, you may ask the school district to pay for it. If the school district pays for the IEE, this is known as an *IEE at public expense*.

Sometimes a parent may feel that the results of the school's evaluation do not accurately describe the child. Some parents may want additional academic tests or medical exams. The right to an IEE at public expense arises only when the school has conducted an evaluation and you disagree with it. If you want the school to pay for an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE), it is best to make your request BEFORE any independent testing is done.

Some reasons you may want to request an independent evaluation include:

- You believe the original evaluation was incorrect. (You are not REQUIRED to specify the area of disagreement.)
- The original evaluation was not done in your child's native language.
- You believe the original evaluation was incomplete and additional tests are needed.
- The evaluation was not done with the needed accommodations (for example, in Braille or administered by someone who knows sign language).

The school district may agree to your request and pay for the IEE or the school may deny your request and ask for a due process hearing to show that its evaluation was appropriate. You will have the chance at this hearing to state your reasons why the school district should be required to pay for the IEE. If the hearing officer decides in favor of the school, you may still obtain an IEE, but you must pay for it. The results of the IEE must be considered by the school in any decision made regarding your child's free appropriate public education. If the school does not request a hearing to dispute your request of an IEE, the school must pay for the IEE.

REQUESTING AN INDEPENDENT EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION (IEE) AT PUBLIC EXPENSE

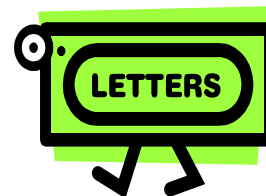
Date (include month, day, and year)

Name of Person to whom you are writing

Name of School

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code



Dear (person's name):

My son/daughter, (child's name) is in the () grade, at (name of school), in (teacher's name) class. He/She was evaluated for special education services in (month/year). I do not feel that the school's evaluation of my child is appropriate, and I am writing to request an Independent Educational Evaluation at public expense.

Please tell me in writing of the criteria under which the independent evaluation must be conducted so that it meets the criteria the school uses in its evaluation. Also, please give me a written list of places where I may obtain an independent evaluation for my child.

I understand that the school district must pay for the independent evaluation, unless the school requests a due process hearing to prove that its evaluation was appropriate.

I will send you the results of the independent evaluation. I understand the results of that evaluation must be considered in any future decisions about my child's education.

Thank you for your prompt attention to my request. I would like this Independent Educational Evaluation to be done as quickly as possible so that we can fully address (child's name) needs. My daytime telephone number is (give your phone number). My email address is (give your email address). Thank you.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

cc: Your child's principal

REQUESTING AN IEP (INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM) OR SECTION 504 TEAM MEETING

Your child receives support and services with an IEP or a Section 504 Plan. You may wish to discuss changes with medical needs of your child, changes with modifications, placement or related services. Your child may not be having success with the present plan. You wish to discuss your concerns with the team and address those possible changes to your child's program.

All decisions made concerning your child's educational program must be made by the team.

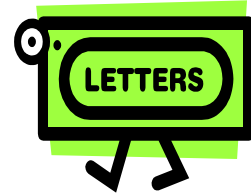


If you have met as an IEP team and have not been able to develop an IEP, you may wish to request a facilitated IEP.

**REQUESTING AN IEP (INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION
PROGRAM) OR SECTION 504
ACCOMMODATION PLAN TEAM MEETING**

Date (include month, day and year)

Name of Principal or Special Education Director
Person's Title (Principal, Special Education Director)
Name of School
Full Address of School



Dear (Name of Principal or Special Education Director):

I am writing to request an/a (IEP or Section 504) team meeting for my child, (child's name), who has a disability.

I would like to discuss (State briefly and specifically your reasons for your request - Examples: Modifications; Annual Goals; Amount of Related Services; Making some possible changes with...etc.).

The next two paragraphs should only be used if they apply to your situation.

I would like to request that (name of specialists or other staff) attend the team meeting because I feel his/her/their ideas about the IEP/504 plan will be valuable.

(You may wish to bring a specialist from outside of the school setting with you that you have been working with or has knowledge that would be helpful to your child's program.) I have been working with (name of specialist) and will be bringing them with me to the team meeting.

The following times would work well with my schedule: (List dates and times. It is helpful if you can offer 'windows' of time - example: 3:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M. It is also helpful to offer at least three different dates and times). Please let me know what times work best for you.

I look forward to hearing from you soon. My daytime telephone number is (give your phone number). My email address is (give your email address). Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Your name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

cc: Specialists or other staff

FACILITATED IEP MEETINGS

IEP facilitation is all about the student and helping the IEP team overcome the pressure and anxiety often associated with IEP meetings. The focus of the team is to remain on the best interests of the student. The facilitator is a skilled special education mediator who has received specialized training in the area of IEP development.

IEP facilitation is a voluntary process. The facilitator's primary goal is to assist team members in the thoughtful, productive construction of a quality individualized educational plan. This is achieved by encouraging and directing communication specific to the IEP, and assuring that the members of the IEP team communicate effectively and with respect toward each other. The facilitator makes **no** educational decisions regarding the student; rather, the facilitator will address issues during the process that incite tension within the team, so that they are effectively able to find their own solution.

The IEP Facilitation Process

1. Before the IEP meeting begins, the facilitator will make sure an agreement to facilitate is signed and in place.
2. The facilitated IEP meeting is run like all other IEP meetings, except the facilitator assists the team to stay focused on productive IEP issues.
3. If following the meeting, the IEP team reaches an agreed upon plan, the IEP facilitator will assist the parties in reviewing and signing the plan.
4. If an agreement on the plan is not reached following the meeting, the parties may elect to schedule an additional meeting with or without the facilitator.
5. Participants are asked to complete an evaluation of the facilitator and the IEP facilitation process at the end of the meeting.

How Long is the Facilitated IEP Meeting?

Generally, the length of the facilitated IEP meeting is unknown. Many IEP meetings run at least one hour, so it should be assumed that a contentious, facilitated IEP meeting will take longer. In those instances where a day is not sufficient to reach an agreed upon plan, IEP facilitation can be scheduled for additional days. Usually an agreed upon successful plan is reached in one day.

How Do I Request a Facilitated IEP?

1. Either party may contact Ohio Department of Education, Office for Exceptional Children Procedural Safeguards at 1-614-466-2650 to request a facilitated IEP.
2. IEP facilitation is available without the need to request a due process hearing or file a formal complaint.
3. IEP facilitation can be requested by any member of the IEP team.
4. IEP facilitation is available during the filing for a due process hearing or during the filing and investigation of a formal complaint.
5. IEP facilitation is provided at no cost to both parties.
6. Once both parties agree to a facilitated IEP, they are provided a list of IEP facilitators to choose from. Both the parent and the school district must agree on the selected facilitator.
7. The selected IEP facilitator will contact both parties to set up the date, time, and location of the IEP facilitation.

Not a Replacement for Procedural Rights

A facilitated IEP can be requested before a complaint, mediation, or due process is filed.

A facilitated IEP does not replace any of the parent's procedural safeguards but can build IEP team communication, aid in developing an appropriate IEP, and alleviate the need for requesting any of the above options.



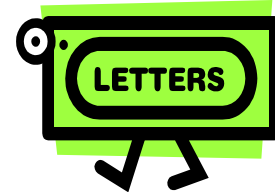
REQUESTING TO VIEW YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATIONAL RECORDS

IDEA 2004 gives you the right to look at all of your child's educational records. Your child may have a special education file in addition to their regular education file. This includes records about his or her identification, evaluation, educational placement, and special education program. You also have the right to ask the school to explain and interpret the records for you. You may ask the school to give you a copy of your child's records. The school may charge you a reasonable fee for making copies.

School records contain valuable information about your child's strengths and areas of need. These records can provide a formal way of communicating between the professionals at your child's school, you, and other professionals who may work with your child. Here are some reasons you might have for requesting a copy of your child's records:

- Reviewing records lets you be sure that the records are correct and contain all necessary information.
- To see if your child is making progress and is receiving the services provided according to the IEP.
- When your family is moving to a new school district, records may need to be sent.
- If you take your child for an independent evaluation, copies of past records may be useful.
- The records may help the staff, at other programs your child attends (like camp, tutors, or private therapy), design their activities.
- Postsecondary programs may need to see copies of your child's records.
- To have a copy for your home files, especially if you need to prepare for an impartial due process hearing.

REQUESTING TO VIEW YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATIONAL RECORDS



Date (include month, day, and year)

Name of School Principal

Name of School

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

Dear (Name of Principal):

I am writing to schedule a time to come and review all of my child's records, both regular education and special education.

My son/daughter, (child's name), is in the (____) grade at (name of school), in (teacher's name) class. I also will need copies of some or all of these records.

Please let me know where and when I can come in to see the records. I request to review these records by (date).

My daytime telephone number is (give your phone number). My email address is (give your email address). Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

REQUESTING A CHANGE IN YOUR CHILD'S RECORDS

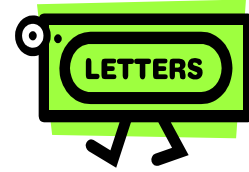
If you believe that any information in your child's record is inaccurate, misleading, or violates the privacy or other rights of your child, you may ask the school district to change the information. The school district must decide whether or not to change the information within a reasonable amount of time.



REQUESTING A CHANGE IN YOUR CHILD'S RECORDS

Date (include month, day, and year)

Name of Principal
Name of School
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code



Dear (Name of Principal):

I am the parent of (child's name), a student at your school. There is a statement in (child's name)'s (give name of records, e.g., "Notice of Suspension") which I believe is ("misleading," "inaccurate," "in violation of my child's rights") because (give reasons).

I request that you (change, remove) (name of child)'s records so that they will no longer be ("misleading," "inaccurate," "in violation of my child's rights").

I look forward to hearing from you soon. My daytime telephone number is (give your phone number). My email address is (give your email address). Thank you.

Sincerely,

Your Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

REQUESTING A RECORDS HEARING

If the school district refuses to change the information as you requested, you must be informed of the refusal, and of your right to a Records Hearing. The Records Hearing gives you a chance to challenge the information in the education records to ensure that it is accurate, is not misleading, or in violation of the privacy or other rights of your child.



FERPA

**Family Educational
Rights & Privacy Act**

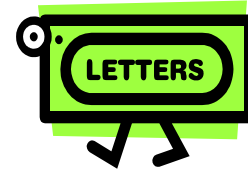
REQUESTING A RECORDS HEARING

Date (include month, day and year)

Name of Superintendent

Name of School District

Full Address of School



Dear (Superintendent's Name):

I am the parent of (child's name), who has a disability, and is in the (____) grade at (name of school), in (teacher's name) class.

I have been informed of **(or)** received notification of the school district's refusal to change my child's records to reflect the specific requests I have made.

I am requesting a Records Hearing be held concerning these changes in my child's records.

Please advise me of the date, place and time in advance of this hearing.

I can be reached at (your daytime phone number) or by email (give your email address). I look forward to your prompt attention to my request. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

REQUESTING A MEETING TO REVIEW THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)

If your child is receiving special education services, he or she must have a written plan known as an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP lists, among other things, annual goals and objectives for your child and the special education services that he or she will receive. You are a member of the team that writes your child's IEP. As an IEP team member, you can ask that your child's IEP be reviewed and revised, if needed.

Some reasons for requesting an IEP review include:

- Your child has met one, or several, of the goals written in the IEP and you want to add new goals.
- Your child does not seem to be making enough progress toward one, or several, of the goals written in the IEP.
- You feel your child needs more services or other services in order to make progress.
- You feel that your child no longer needs a service he or she is currently receiving.
- Your child has experienced a major change, such as illness, injury, or surgery.

REQUESTING A MEETING TO REVIEW THE INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)

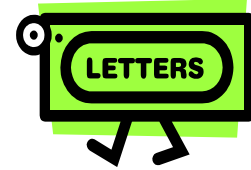
Date (include month, day, and year)

Name of Your Child's Special Education Teacher
or Principal

Name of School

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code



Dear (Teacher's or Principal's Name):

I am writing to request an IEP review meeting. I would like to discuss the possibility of making some changes in (child's name)'s IEP. I am concerned about (state your reasons, but limit discussion about the specific changes you want to make because you will want to hear the school's position at the meeting).

I would also like to have (names of specialists or other staff) attend because his/her/their ideas about the changes we may need to make will be valuable.

I can arrange to meet with you and the other members of the IEP team on (list days you are available) between (give a range of time, such as between 2:00 and 4:00). Please let me know what time would be best for you.

My daytime telephone number is (give your phone number). My email address is (give your email address). Thank you in advance for your assistance in scheduling this meeting.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

cc: Other staff

REQUESTING A CHANGE OF PLACEMENT

Placement means the type of setting (regular class, resource room, special class, special school, home, hospital or institution) where your child's IEP is carried out. Placement is based on the IEP. Therefore, when you request a change in placement, you are actually requesting an IEP review to discuss your child's needs and where those needs are met.

Placement means how much time your child spends being educated with children who do not have disabilities. It does not mean the school building or location of services.

You might want to request a change in your child's placement if you feel that your child's needs are not being met appropriately. For example, you may become concerned about your child's placement after reviewing your child's progress reports; reviewing the results of any state, district-wide, or alternate assessments your child has been given; talking with your child's teacher or other service providers; or talking with your child. You might want to request more time in a regular education classroom so that your child can improve language skills or social behavior. Your child might also need a more restrictive placement because a smaller class size helps your child's problems with attention.

The IEP Team decides:

- What services a child needs
- Where those services will be provided

Where the child's IEP services are carried out is called **PLACEMENT**.

The different options where children can receive services:

- a general education class
 - a special education class
 - a special education school at home, or
 - in a hospital or other public or private institution
- [§300.115]



REQUESTING A CHANGE OF PLACEMENT

Date (include month, day, and year)

Name of Principal or Special Education Administrator

Name of School

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code



Dear (Principal's or Administrator's name):

I am writing to request a meeting to discuss a change in placement for my son/daughter, (child's name). He/she is currently in the (____) grade in (teacher's name) class. I feel he/she needs to be in (name of alternative, if you know; otherwise describe the type of placement you feel is more appropriate for your child, such as your neighborhood school, a center-based program, general education class, or special class).

I am most concerned about (keep this paragraph brief and mention your child's unmet needs, not problems with individual people).

I would also like to have (name of teacher(s) and/or any specialists you would like from the current and/or requested placement) attend this meeting.

I can arrange to meet with the rest of the IEP team on (list days you are available to meet) between (give a range of time, such as between 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.). Please let me know what time would be best.

I look forward to hearing from you by (date). My daytime telephone number is (give your phone number). My email address is (give your email address). Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

cc: Your child's principal (if letter is addressed to an administrator)

Your child's teacher(s)

Specialists or other staff

REQUESTING PRIOR WRITTEN NOTICE (PR-01)

There are certain times when the school must put in writing its decisions about your child's education and the reasons for those decisions. This written communication is called Prior Written Notice (PR-01). You have the right to receive prior written notice, whenever the school wants to (or refuses to):

- Evaluate your child,
- Change your child's disability identification,
- Change your child's educational placement, or
- Change the way in which your child is provided a FAPE.

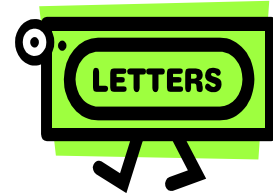
The school district should automatically provide you with Prior Written Notice in any of these events. In practice, though, sometimes the school may tell you its decision over the telephone, in a meeting, or in a one-on-one conversation. If you want the notification in writing, you may ask the school district to provide it. It is best that you put your request in writing.

For example, you may have asked for a change in your child's placement. The school district may tell you on the phone that it has denied your request. You may ask for Prior Written Notice of this denial. The school must then put its decision in writing and explain the reasons for the decision. This information can be helpful if you pursue the placement change through a due process hearing. You will then have in writing the school district's reasons for denying the placement change.

REQUESTING PRIOR WRITTEN NOTICE

Date (include month, day, and year)

Name of School Principal
Name of School
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code



Dear (name):

At our meeting (or during our phone conversation) on (date), we discussed my child's (evaluation, eligibility, placement, IEP, services, etc.). I requested (_____) and was denied (or I was told the school intends to _____) but I have never received any information about this decision in writing. In accordance with the IDEA regulations, I am requesting prior written notice regarding (be very specific about the issue/decision you want the school to address. Number the items if you have more than one issue.) According to Ohio's Operating Standards, prior written notice must include the following:

1. A description of what the school is proposing or refusing to do;
2. An explanation of why the school proposes or refuses this action;
3. A description of any other options the school considered and the reasons why those options were rejected;
4. A description of each evaluation procedure, test, record, or report the school used as a basis for this decision;
5. A description of any other relevant factors that went into this decision;
6. Information on how I can obtain a copy of procedural safeguards available to me under the law and a full explanation of the safeguards; and,
7. Information on sources I can contact for help in understanding the provisions of this rule.

I look forward to receiving a detailed response to my request. Should you need to speak with me, my daytime telephone number is (give your phone number). Thank you.

Sincerely,

Your Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

cc: Other staff

REQUESTING MEDIATION

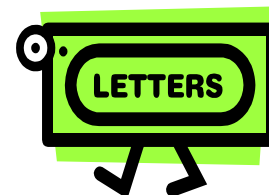
Anytime you have a serious disagreement with the school and the school is not working toward a resolution, you may request mediation. In mediation, you and school personnel sit down with an impartial third person (called a mediator), talk about the areas where you disagree, and try to reach an agreement. Mediation is voluntary, though, and *both parties must agree to meet with a mediator*. There are benefits to mediation, both for you and for the school. One of the chief benefits is that mediation allows you and the school to state your concerns and work together to reach a solution that focuses on the needs of the student and is acceptable to both of you.



REQUESTING MEDIATION

Date (include month, day, and year)

Ohio Department of Education
Office for Exceptional Children
Procedural Safeguards Section
25 South Front Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215-4183



Dear Director of Procedural Safeguards:

My son/daughter, (child's name), currently attends (name of school) and is in the (____) grade in (teacher's name) class. I am writing to inform you that the school and I are in disagreement concerning (BRIEFLY state what the disagreement is about). We have been unsuccessful in resolving this dispute, and I am requesting the Ohio Department of Education provide mediation so that we may resolve our differences. I have attempted to resolve my complaint with the district through both meetings and phone calls, without success.

I would like the mediation to be done as soon as possible. Please let me know when this can be arranged. My daytime telephone number is (give your phone number). My email address is (give your email address). Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Your Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code
Daytime telephone number

cc: Your child's principal
Your child's teacher

Note: If you want to request a particular mediator, you may also want to put in a sentence after the first sentence of the second paragraph that states: "I would like to request that (name of particular mediator) be assigned to mediate my case, if the district has no objection." (This does not insure you will be assigned the mediator you requested. You do have the right to deny a particular mediator.)

REQUESTING A DUE PROCESS HEARING

A due process hearing is one approach that parents and schools can use to resolve disagreements. In a due process hearing, you and the school present evidence before an impartial third person called a hearing officer. The hearing officer then decides how to resolve the problem. You have the right to request a due process hearing on any matter related to:

- Your child's identification as a "child with a disability",
- His or her evaluation,
- His or her educational placement, and
- The special education and related services that the school provides to your child.

Some reasons why a parent might file for due process include:

- The school refuses to evaluate your child.
- You disagree with the school's eligibility decision.
- You disagree with the services, goals, or objectives in the IEP.
- The school refuses to provide a related service, modification, or supplementary aid you think your child needs.
- You disagree with the placement decision.
- You disagree with disciplinary action imposed by the school.

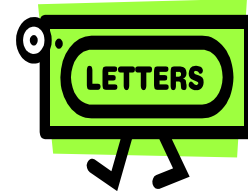
Typically when the parent and school disagree, it is important for both sides to first discuss their concerns and try to reach a compromise. However, if you and the school have fully communicated, understand each other's positions, tried such strategies as IEP meetings and/or mediation, and you still disagree, you may want to request a due process hearing.

Send your letter to the Superintendent of your child's school district and also a copy to the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). The Ohio Department of Education will provide you and the school district a list of hearing officers.

REQUESTING A DUE PROCESS HEARING

Date (include month, day, and year)

Superintendent (Name of Superintendent
for Your Child's School District)
(Name of School District)
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code



Dear (Name of Superintendent):

I am writing to request a due process hearing pursuant to Chapter 3323 of the Ohio Revised Code and implementing regulations. I am the parent of (child's name), a (child's age) year old student at (child's school), in the (child's school district). (Child's name)'s birth date is (child's date of birth). He/she is in the (____) grade.

I have met with school personnel in an effort to resolve our differences concerning my son's/daughter's (IEP, placement, testing, or ...) and have been unable to do so. The nature of our disagreement is as follows:

- 1) Explain the problem with BRIEF statements of fact.
- 2) Consider listing the facts separately with numbers.

An acceptable resolution of the problem would include ... (To the extent that you know how you want the disagreement to be resolved, state these facts, numbering the items if possible.)

I also request that this hearing be (open/closed) to persons other than those directly involved. (Child's name) will/will not attend the hearing.

My daytime telephone number is (your phone number). My email address is (give your email address). Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Your Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

cc: Your child's principal
Ohio Department of Education, Office of Procedural Safeguards
Your attorney

DOCUMENTING PHONE CONVERSATIONS OR OTHER CONVERSATIONS

Taking notes from phone conversations, face to face conversations or meetings is a way to keep communication with school open, increase the likelihood that problems will be identified early, and if needed, provide you with a written history to use in mediation, hearings or court. This process is referred to as documentation.

For each conversation or meeting, record the date and time, names and summary. The summary should reflect only statements made in the conversations and your perceptions of those statements.

You should write a confirming or follow-up letter after telephone calls noting the date, time and summary of the phone call.

When sending the individual your documentation of the conversation, always include a statement giving them the opportunity to respond if they feel your account is not accurate. If they do respond, you should follow-up with an acknowledgement of their response and a statement reflecting that you agree or disagree with their response.

In order to have a complete and accurate record, the meetings, especially IEP meetings, can be recorded. At the beginning of the meeting or prior to the day of the meeting, you should inform the school that you would be recording the meeting.

DOCUMENTING PHONE CONVERSATIONS OR OTHER CONVERSATIONS

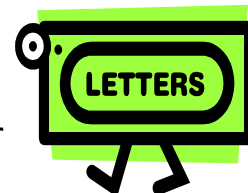
Date (include month, day and year)

Full Name of Person to whom you are writing
(Principal, Special Education Director, Teacher, or other
person you had the conversation with)

Person's Title (Principal, Special Education Director,
Teacher, etc.)

Name of School

Full Address of School



Dear (name):

The following is an account of our (phone conversation, meeting,
conference, conversation at school) on (date and time of
conversation).

(State briefly and factually what was discussed, decisions made, etc.
To avoid misinterpretations, you could use words like: perception;
what I thought I heard you saying; I feel that... Example: What I
thought I heard you saying was that you felt my child needed to be
given Ritalin.) Please respond in writing if you feel this is not an
accurate account of our conversation.

Thank you for reviewing this correspondence. I would appreciate you
placing this letter in my child's file.

Sincerely,

Your Full Name

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

****Note**** If you receive a call or note that states they do not agree
with parts of what you have sent them, you will need to respond and
state you either agree with them or are still standing by your original
account of the conversation.

WHEN THE SCHOOL DOES NOT RESPOND TO YOUR REQUESTS

Once you have written a letter or made a phone call with a request of some nature pertaining to your child's educational program, you should get some type of response from the school district.

If you feel that too much time has passed without receiving a response to your letter, then call and ask if your letter has been received.

If you are sure the school has received your letter (you may have sent your original letter certified or registered mail), then ask when you can expect to hear from them.

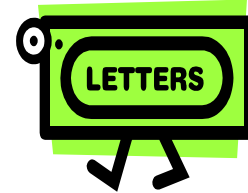
If your request still goes unanswered then you may want to write again. It would be useful to enclose a copy of the original request. Be sure to keep copies of your letters in your home file.



WHEN THE SCHOOL DOES NOT RESPOND TO YOUR REQUESTS – FOLLOW UP LETTER

Date (include month, day, and year)

Full Name of Person to Whom You Originally Wrote
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code



Dear (name):

I wrote to you on (date) and also called on (date) to make sure you had received my letter. I left a message for you to call me back on (date), but since I have not heard from you, I thought it best to write again.

I am writing to request (Briefly write down whatever your first letter or contact requested) and have enclosed a copy of my first letter to you.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. I would like to hear from you by (give a date). I may be reached at (your daytime phone number). My email address is (give your email address).

Sincerely,

Your Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

REQUESTING A HEARING OF APPEAL FOR A DECISION THAT YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOR WAS NOT A MANIFESTATION OF THEIR DISABILITY

If disciplinary action is contemplated as a result of:

- (a) drugs or alcohol,
- (b) injury to self or others,
- (c) child has engaged in other behavior that violated any rule or code of conduct,

-and-

If any of these resulted in a contemplation of a change of placement for more than 10 days:

- (1) parents must be notified of the decision and all of the procedural safeguards not later than the date on which the decision to take action is made;
- (2) a manifestation review must be conducted immediately, if possible, but in no case later than 10 school days after the date on which the decision to take action is made. A manifestation review must be conducted of the relationship between the child's disability and the behavior subject to disciplinary action. The review is to be conducted by the IEP team and other qualified personnel.

If it is determined that the behavior of the child with a disability was not a manifestation of the child's disability, the disciplinary procedure applicable to children without disabilities may be applied to the disabled child in the same manner. The school district must provide the child with a free, appropriate, public education.

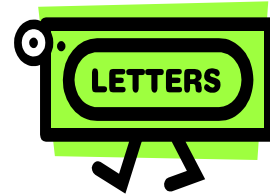
If you disagree with the manifestation hearing review determination and you believe your child's behavior was a manifestation of their disability, you have the right to request a hearing. You can request the state department of education or the local school district to arrange an expedited hearing.



**REQUESTING A HEARING OF APPEAL FOR
A DECISION THAT YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOR
WAS NOT A MANIFESTATION OF THEIR DISABILITY**

Date (include month, day and year)

Office for Exceptional Children
Procedural Safeguards
Ohio Department of Education
25 S. Front St., Mail Stop 409
Columbus, Ohio 43215



Dear Sir or Madam:

I am the parent of (child's name), age (child's age and birth date). (Child's name) is in the ____ grade at (name of school). He/she is identified as a child with a disability.

On (date) the (name of school) made a determination that (child's name)'s behavior on (date/dates) was not a manifestation of his/her disability.

I disagree with that determination and am requesting an expedited hearing to review this decision.

I may be reached at (your daytime phone number). My email address is (give your email address). Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Your Full Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Mailing Instructions

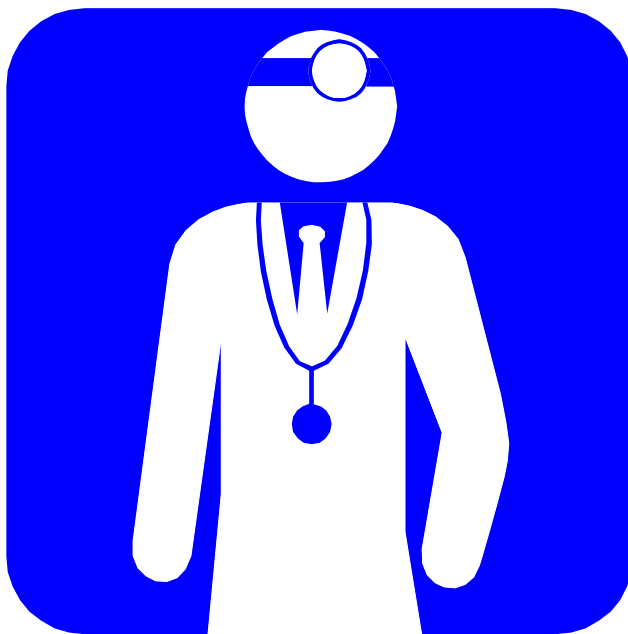
***This letter should be sent certified with return receipt requested to both the Superintendent and the Office for Exceptional Children.

cc: Superintendent

MEDICAL ABSENCES

It may be necessary over the course of your child's educational career for him/her to have extended periods of time out of school due to medical conditions.

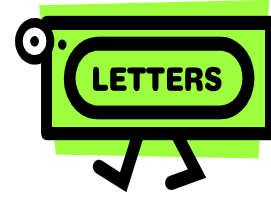
If this occurs, the school will need to have a doctor's written excuse and the IEP team will need to convene to determine how your child's educational needs will be met during their absence.



MEDICAL ABSENCES

Date (Include month, day and year)

Name of Principal
Person's Title (Principal)
Name of School
Full Address of School



Dear (name):

I am the parent of (child's name), who has a disability, and is in the ____ grade at (name of school).

Due to (briefly state the reason your child will not be able to attend school), (child's name) will not be able to attend school for (if possible, give an estimated length of time he/she will be absent). I have enclosed a statement from (name of your child's doctor).

Please contact me with the school's policies concerning home instruction when a student is unable to attend school due to medical conditions.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. I may be reached at (your daytime phone number) or by email at (give your email address).

Sincerely,

Your Full Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR SERVICES

Extended school year (ESY) services are special education and related services that are provided by the school district beyond the traditional school year, usually during the summer.

The school district should provide ESY services to a child with disabilities if the services are necessary for the child to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE). The service must be provided at no cost to parents.

An expert or the IEP team can make a recommendation about whether ESY is necessary to prevent failure without evidence of actual harm or failure to your child. The decision about ESY eligibility is made by your child's IEP team. Your child does not have to fail to be eligible for ESY.

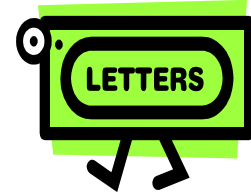
Early referral is better. It is best to refer a child several months before the summer break to allow time to schedule and conduct an IEP meeting. If the school denies a request for ESY services, you have the right to request an impartial due process hearing to settle disagreements. If you must file for a due process hearing on the issue, early referral insures that the hearing officer's decision will be made before the summer arrives.

If you feel your child should receive extended school year services, send a letter to your school requesting that your child be considered for ESY services (see next page for sample letter).

REQUESTING EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR (ESY) SERVICES

Date (include month, day and year)

Name of School District
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code



Dear (name of Special Education Coordinator):

I am writing to refer my child for consideration for extended school year (ESY) services. (Child's name) needs ESY because (explain reasons). I am asking that you schedule an IEP meeting to discuss ESY eligibility for (child's name).

I also would like to have (names of specialists or other staff) attend because his/her/their ideas about the need for ESY will be helpful in determining whether (child's name) is eligible for ESY.

I can arrange to meet with you and the other members of the IEP team on (list days you are available) between (give a range of time, such as between 2:00 and 4:00). Please let me know what time would be best for you.

I look forward to hearing from you by (date). My daytime telephone number is (give your phone number). My email address is (you're your email address). Thank you.

Sincerely,

Your Full Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

cc: Specialists or other staff

WRITING A POSITIVE FEEDBACK LETTER

It is so very easy to remember to write a letter about all the things that are going wrong. It's very important, however, to remember to write a letter about all the things that are going right.

Good communication, good team work, and effective school programs and policies take a lot of work. Make every effort to remember to give compliments and extend words of encouragement when appropriate.

If a teacher, therapist, or other staff member has made good things happen for your child, let them and their supervisors know. Everyone likes and needs positive feedback. This helps you to develop and keep a successful parent-professional working relationship.



WRITING A POSITIVE FEEDBACK LETTER

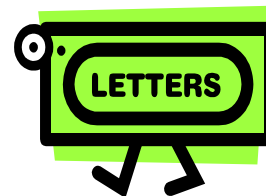
Date (include month, day and year)

Name of Person to Whom You Are Writing

Title

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code



Dear (Name):

I am writing to let you know how pleased I am with the education my son/daughter, (child's name) is receiving at (name of school).

(Child's name) has had great success with (briefly say what is going right). In particular, (name the professionals working with your child and how they have made a difference).

I look forward to (child's name)'s continuing progress. Thank you for all of your efforts, and for the efforts of your staff on behalf of (child's name).

Sincerely,

Your Full Name

Street Address

City, State, Zip Code

Daytime telephone number

Email address

cc: If you write to the school district's Superintendent or Director of Special Education, make sure to copy the people who directly deserve recognition for your child's success such as the principal, teachers, and other staff.



OHIO COALITION FOR THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES
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