



Strengths-Based IEPs: Talking Points for Parents

These points can help you talk with your child's principal, a local school board member or a local teachers' group about the need for professional development (PD) in strengths-based IEPs.

“I’d like our school/district to get PD in strengths-based IEPs because...”

- Strengths-based IEPs use students’ abilities to help work on their weaknesses, but teachers need time and support to learn how to develop IEP goals that leverage student strengths.
 - The process of identifying strengths, interests and preferences helps increase self-awareness, which can also lead to more self-advocacy.
 - Emphasizing strengths as a way to work on weaknesses not only sets a positive tone—it helps teachers see how to help kids like mine make progress toward their goals.
 - *Describe a recent situation at your child’s school and how a strengths-based IEP might have improved your child’s experience:* _____
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“Has our school/district provided teacher training on...”

- Strengths-based IEPs?
- Identifying strengths? Helping students actively participate in IEP meetings? Addressing parent concerns about student participation?
- Growth mindset? Strengths-based IEPs fit perfectly with that model.

“Strengths-based IEPs aren’t a big drain on school budgets.”

- Strengths-based IEPs don’t require any technology purchases.
- Our school/district may already have access to a strengths finder. If not, there are free strengths assessments online.

“ESSA provides funding for PD.”

- The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced No Child Left Behind in 2015, sets aside funding for PD for all states and local districts. (Pro tip: ESSA is pronounced *Ess-uh*.)
- Schools don’t have to receive Title I funding to receive Title II PD funding or Title IV funding, which can be used for PD in technology that involves personalized learning.

“I want to ask about the PD planning process.”

- How much control do you have over the school’s/district’s PD? Who else do you recommend I contact about this?
- When are decisions made about PD?
- Some districts are already making strides in implementing student-led and strengths-based IEPs. How can we make this a priority for our school/district?