



# Understanding IEP Eligibility: It's Not Just About Grades

**FOR PARENTS!**



# EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE IS ABOUT MORE THAN REPORT CARDS

WHEN SCHOOLS SAY A CHILD DOESN'T QUALIFY FOR AN IEP BECAUSE THEIR GRADES ARE OKAY, IT CAN BE CONFUSING AND FRUSTRATING—ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU KNOW SOMETHING ISN'T RIGHT. HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

## In the Two-Part Test for IEP Eligibility Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a child must meet both of the following:

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### THE CHILD HAS A QUALIFYING DISABILITY

One or more of 13 categories, including:

- Specific Learning Disability (SLD), including dyslexia
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- ADHD (Other Health Impairment)
- Speech & Language Impairment
- Hearing, Vision, or Orthopedic Impairments, *and others*

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### THE DISABILITY ADVERSELY AFFECTS EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE\*, AND THE CHILD NEEDS SPECIALIZED INSTRUCTION

This is the key part. "Educational performance" is not limited to grades. It can include:

\*Educational performance includes how a child learns, communicates, and functions at school—not just their GPA or state test scores.

AREA	EXAMPLES OF STRUGGLES THAT MAY QUALIFY
ACADEMIC SKILLS	DIFFICULTY READING FLUENTLY, POOR SPELLING, INCOMPLETE ASSIGNMENTS, STRUGGLES WITH COMPREHENSION
COMMUNICATION	TROUBLE EXPRESSING IDEAS, FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS, OR JOINING DISCUSSIONS
EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING	DISORGANIZATION, FORGETFULNESS, LACK OF FOCUS, TROUBLE COMPLETING MULTI-STEP TASKS
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS	ANXIETY ABOUT SCHOOL, LOW CONFIDENCE, FRUSTRATION, AVOIDANCE, OR ACTING OUT
FUNCTIONAL PERFORMANCE	TROUBLE NAVIGATING ROUTINES, NEEDING ADULT SUPPORT FOR BASIC TASKS, DIFFICULTY WITH INDEPENDENCE

### Helpful Phrases:

"My child may be passing, but it takes hours of extra support at home just to keep up."

"I'm concerned about how much effort it takes for him to do grade-level work—and how anxious he's becoming."

# Parent Advocacy Meeting Script

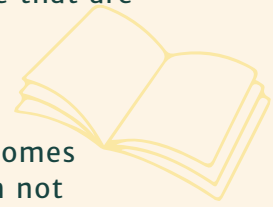
## OPENING THE MEETING

"Thank you all for meeting with me today. I really appreciate the time and effort you put into supporting my child."

"I want to start by sharing some things I've been observing at home that are really concerning to me."

## EXPRESSING OBSERVATIONS (WITHOUT JUDGMENT)

"At home, reading is a major struggle. [Child's name] avoids it, becomes frustrated quickly, and often says things like 'I hate reading' or 'I'm not smart.'"



"Homework that involves reading takes [X] times longer than it should. I often have to sit right beside [him/her] just to get through a few sentences."

"These struggles are beginning to impact [his/her] confidence and attitude toward school."

## REFRAMING "THEY'RE FINE AT SCHOOL"

"I understand that [child's name] may appear to be doing fine in the classroom setting, but I'd like us to consider the full picture, including what I'm seeing at home."

"Grades or behavior aren't the only indicators of a learning difficulty—especially with bright, hardworking kids. I'd like to discuss whether there might be a learning difference, such as dyslexia, that's going unnoticed."

## ASKING ABOUT PROGRESS & DATA

"What data is currently being used to track [child's name]'s reading progress?"

"Has [he/she] been screened for dyslexia or other reading-related issues?"

"What interventions have been tried so far, and how often are they being provided?"

## MAKING A CLEAR ASK

"Based on what I'm seeing, I'd like to formally request a comprehensive special education evaluation to determine if there's a specific learning disability."

"I understand that under IDEA, parents have the right to request this evaluation, and I'd like to move forward with that today."

(Optional if 504 may be appropriate:)

"If an IEP isn't the right path, I'd also like to explore a 504 Plan simultaneously so [his/her] needs will be met."

## CLOSE WITH COLLABORATION

### Follow-up tip for parents:

After the meeting, always follow up with a thank you email that also summarizes what was discussed and puts your evaluation request in writing.

# Bonus: Sample Email to Request an IEP Evaluation

**Subject: Request for Special Education Evaluation**

**Dear [Principal's Name / School Psychologist],**

**I am writing to formally request a comprehensive special education evaluation for my child, [Your Child's Name], who is in [Grade/Classroom Teacher].**

**While [he/she/they] may appear to be doing okay academically, I have ongoing concerns about [specific struggles — e.g., reading fluency, comprehension, frustration, focus, etc.], which I believe may be affecting [his/her/their] ability to fully access the curriculum and succeed without significant support.**

**I understand that eligibility under IDEA requires that a disability adversely affect educational performance—not just grades. I am requesting this evaluation to determine if [Your Child's Name] may qualify for specialized instruction through an Individualized Education Program (IEP).**

**Please confirm receipt of this request and let me know the next steps.**

**Sincerely,  
[Your Name]  
[Your Contact Info]**

# I'm here to help!

Knowing what to ask and what to look for in effective reading instruction are essential first steps in a smooth literacy journey for your child.

Schedule a free 20-minute parent consultation at the link below or on my website [michellehendersonliteracy.com](https://michellehendersonliteracy.com). We'll discuss your top 3 concerns and actionable steps to address them. Check below for ways to stay in touch!

**SCHEDULE A FREE PARENT CONSULT**

DISCLAIMER: Michelle Henderson Literacy assumes no responsibility or liability for any errors or omissions in the content of this resource. The information provided is on an "as is" basis with no guarantees of legal completeness, accuracy, usefulness, or timeliness.



Aloha! I am a nationally certified Structured Literacy Dyslexia Specialist and the parent of a child with dyslexia. I'm in the trenches with you! My mission is to support you throughout this journey. Advocating for your child doesn't have to feel daunting. I'm here to help!

*Michelle*



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