

Tips for Parents Participating In Your District's Self-Assessment of Special Education

- Be prepared! Make sure you review IDEA and the State Code before the process starts, and periodically along the way. You may be the most knowledgeable person on your team about what the law actually requires!
 - As a parent member, remember that you aren't just representing your own experience but the experiences of other parents. Talk to other parents to get their ideas, concerns, and recommendations.
 - Take a look at the state self-assessment document before or during your district self-assessment process. This will give you a good idea about how the process should work and how detailed and honest the self-assessment should be.
 - Don't be afraid to be the only person raising a concern. You have a unique perspective, so you may be the only person who's aware of that concern or who cares so much about it.
 - Stand up for your right to include your concerns in the summary of concerns; raising concerns is part consensus-building!
 - Look closely at your district's data. Does it coincide with your experience? Raise questions about the accuracy of data if it doesn't feel right to you. Ask where the data came from, and how it was compiled.
 - Add other data you are aware of, or suggest other data sources.
- Make sure your concerns and recommendations are included in the self-assessment document.
 - Go to every meeting! Lots can happen in one meeting, and you don't want your perspective to be ignored anywhere along the way.
 - Make sure that your district's public forum is widely publicized, and that supports such as transportation, food, and child care are provided and forums are scheduled at time that will maximize parent participation.
 - Utilize the information gathered through the surveys and forum when your team is discussing each area of program effectiveness and compliance.
 - Advocate for the results of the self-assessment to be widely disseminated in your district. It's important for everyone to know where your district is, and where you are heading, so that everyone can pitch in to help reach your goals.