

How to Prepare for a PPT and Triennial Results Meetings

By Patricia Stavola (April 2014)

Your child has had Triennial testing done and your PPT date is set. How do you approach this all-important meeting?

Prior to the PPT:

When preparing for any PPT make a request, in writing, for a copy of all proposed goals and objectives and any proposed changes to your child's program at least 5 days prior to the PPT.

If the school objects, restate your request, in writing, stating you feel the meeting will be more productive if you have this information in advance (because you are not a fast reader and the team would not want to sit while you read the document for the first time).

When you get a notice of a PPT meeting send an email to advise that you will be taping the meeting. You can use your Smartphone...make sure it is fully charged.

Always make your requests in writing. E-mail is great when you need a written record of your requests (and to check on yourself when your memory fails).

Testing:

When it's time for testing to be done on your child, you will need to sign a form allowing it. Once you do so, follow-up with an email to the administrator requesting copies of each test result as soon as it is available. If your PPT date has already been set, specify you would like all test results at least 5 days prior to the PPT, earlier if possible. You want to have a productive PPT meeting. Reviewing the test results in advance keeps the meeting on track and the team won't have to spend so much time going over the tests and explaining all the sub-tests during the meeting.

You can also request meetings with specialists – e.g. the PT, OT, SLP, Psychologist, Special Ed teacher or Case Manager - to go over test results and breakdown the sub-tests and what it means for your child. Ask them to use layman's terms not specialist language. Let the school know you want these meetings when you first agree to the testing. Try to have these meetings finished a week before your PPT.

An alternative to specialist meetings is email. Compile a list of questions from the test results and proposals sent. If you're not sure how an objective will be applied and measured or what your child's "present level of performance" (PLOP) is, ask.

Try to send one email with all your questions. You can break it down by specialist but don't send multiple emails or one question at a time. That is time consuming and the school would have a sympathetic argument to make you look like an ineffectual, nervous parent.

Ask, in writing, to be informed when the testing is to take place so you are aware of any changes (stress) your child may be exhibiting. Testing is often done over several weeks by different providers so a general time frame is ok. This way you know when the testing is about complete and you can send an email reminder asking for those results.

The PPT:

The day of the PPT is here. You enter a room, hopefully with at least one person on your side, and face 10-15 district personnel. It can be intimidating. Remember, they are experts in their fields but you are the expert on your child. Most of the people in that room would love to see your child succeed. It would validate their work.

The PPT starts and you feel overwhelmed by the numbers and terminology they are using. Ask the person speaking (specialist) to present the test results in layman's terms and explain how/why their proposed recommendations relate to those results. Ask them to go over the test results first then each goal/objective and how it relates. Have questions that apply to all goals/objectives at the top of your notes:

- What are present levels of performance (PLOP) for each goal/objective?
- How will data be collected, compiled and given to you? Request data monthly. They may say they can only do it quarterly but you can ask for monthly team meetings.
- Is the service offered 1:1, small group, special ed classroom or regular ed classroom? This is on page 11 of the IEP but it is sometimes difficult to figure out.
- What are the prompt levels? Hands-on, verbal, visual...how are they fading prompts?
- How are they generalizing correct behaviors?
- Are Goals/Objectives tiered:
 - Mastered in one setting, use same goal/objective in next setting;
 - mastered 1:1, move to small group or special ed classroom w/prompts, fade prompts
 - mastered special ed classroom, move to regular ed classroom w/prompts, fade prompts
 - social skill mastered at lunch, move to recess, hallway or after school club (from structured to less structured settings)

If the school refused to give you any test results in advance of the PPT and instead provides them at the meeting, advise the team that you will need time to review them then and there. Since you did not see the results in advance, as you had requested in writing, you will need to read through them now before they start explaining anything or making any recommendations. The admin is sure to object to this as a time constraint. You can then ask for the PPT to be continued until you have had time to review all the results and any proposed changes including goals and objectives. Meanwhile you request that all services Stay Put until the PPT can be reconvened.

Continuing the PPT means having to wait to make a request for an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE):

Understand that if you request to continue the PPT because you need time to go over the testing and proposals, you can't request the IEE yet. The school has to have the opportunity to present the results/proposals before you can disagree. So if you postpone the PPT or continue it, you will likely extend the time for the IEE.

If you let them present their findings at the PPT, you can still disagree and request the IEE and then go over the results and proposals on your own time. This at least starts the clock for them regarding the IEE.

The Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE):

If you disagree with the test results you have a right to request an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) at the expense of the school district.

Tell them you disagree with the testing results and the proposals they are making for your child's program. Don't give specific areas of disagreement. They may try to restrict IEE testing to any specific areas of disagreement you mention. If they ask for specifics, say you are not a specialist in this field and you prefer to leave the specifics to the IEE evaluator.

Request a comprehensive neuropsychological evaluation that includes but is not limited to: an observation of regular ed classroom, small classroom, 1:1 specialist time and unstructured activities (lunch, recess, hallway, on/off the bus), as well as educational testing, speech, OT, PT testing as determined by the IEE evaluator.

Ask that your child's program Stay Put until the IEE testing is completed and a new PPT can be convened to discuss the results.

Follow up immediately with email restating these requests.

Have a list of 2 or 3 evaluators you want to use. You can look at their list but they can't restrict you to their evaluators. If your evaluator is qualified under their guidelines they have to use someone from your list but it's best to give them a choice so you don't seem rigid. If they say an evaluator is not qualified, ask them for their written qualifications for an evaluator and why your evaluator does not qualify under those guidelines. They may say they have to research evaluators on your list if they have not heard of them. This is ok but follow up with an email asking for a time frame, 2-3 days to let you know if the evaluator is qualified or why they are not qualified.

If you know what evaluator you want to use you may want to call them to get your name on their list right after the PPT. Many of the better known evaluators have long wait times for appointments. If you wait for the school to make the appointment it may be several months before you get an appointment.

A few years ago, during an annual review in April, I agreed to an IEE with a certain evaluator. The administrator called once and left a message and did not follow up until the following September. It was 9 months rather than 3 months before we had an appointment.

Let the evaluator know the school will be calling for your child or you can tell the school you know this evaluator has an opening in _____ month but don't tell them you actually made the appointment.

Prior Written Notice:

If they refuse an IEE or Stay Put, be sure to request they put that on PRIOR WRITTEN NOTICE. **If it's not on prior written notice on the IEP, it's like you never asked for it.**

Ask for any denied request to be put on Prior Written Notice (pg 3 of the IEP under Actions refused).

If they refuse an IEE, the district is supposed to file for due process. For more on this, reference Wrightslaw, <http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/test.iew.steedman.htm> (an excellent resource).

After the PPT:

If the PPT went well and you feel you were heard, you can wait for the IEP. Review the IEP referencing any notes you took and send an email listing any discrepancies or open questions.

If they left out something you feel is important, either in the Recommendations or Prior Written Notice, be very clear you do not agree with the IEP as is and you are requesting a correction.

State from your notes or listen to the taped meeting and see if what you heard agrees with what they wrote on the IEP. You should send a written response to the IEP within 5 days of receiving it.

If you feel the PPT did not go well, don't wait for the IEP. Send an email, titled "Response to the PPT, date," as soon as you feel calm enough, detailing the points you felt were missed. Stick to the specific points made at the meeting. Don't get emotional.

State the recommendation they are making and give your reasons why you disagree with it. If they refuse to change the IEP, rewrite your email as a formal letter and request within the letter to have the letter attached to the IEP.

Remember that you may request a PPT anytime, even if you just had one. Just send an email formally requesting to convene a PPT.

(Editor's Note: The author, Patricia Stavola, is a mom of 4 teenagers, 2 with special needs.)