
Introduction to Special Education Advocacy - SEAT 1.0

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Course Description: This course is an introduction to advocacy for education services for children/youth with disabilities. It is intended for people new to advocacy who want to increase their understanding of the field of special education advocacy; critical provisions of the federal laws that govern education to students with disabilities; and, increase their knowledge and skills to take the first steps to becoming a special education advocate for students and their families. SEAT.1.0 can be taken 'stand-alone' or can be used as a pre-requisite to SEAT 2.0.

Recommended:

Jennifer Laviano and Julie Swanson, [Your Special Education Rights: What Your School District Isn't Telling You](#), Skyhorse Publishing.

Pam Wright and Pete Wright, [From Emotions to Advocacy](#), second edition.

(These are both excellent books for parents that help explain the advocate mindset, you may want to read one or both if you are brand new to advocacy!)

Required:

Lawrence Siegel, [The Complete IEP Guide: How to Advocate for Your Special Ed Child](#), Nolo Press, 9th edition.

WEEK 1: Education is a Civil Right!

Learning goals:

1. Students will become familiar with the role of the special education advocate in the IEP/504 process.
2. Students will become familiar with the history of special education in the United States and some of the laws that impact children in education.

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3. Students will become familiar with the wide range of laws concerning children with disabilities in education.
 - Watch video “Disability law, policy, and Civil Rights movement,” University of Wisconsin, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbB3Azlil38>
 - Watch video, “The Power of 504”, Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, <https://www.corada.com/videos/the-power-of-504-by-disability-rights-education-defense-fund-dredf>
 - **Assigned Reading:** “Disability Rights: The Overlooked Civil Rights Issue” Doris Zames Fleischer, Ph.D., Frieda Zames, Ph.D., Disability Studies Quarterly, <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/629/806>

Topics Covered:

- Students will hear about the skills and tools needed to become a special education advocate.
- Students will learn about relationship of disability rights to other civil rights movements.
- Students will be introduced to laws protecting those rights: 504, ADA, IDEA, FERPA, McKinney Vento.
- Students will discuss of the role of advocate in advancing those rights.

WEEK 2: What make Special Education special? What is the difference between IDEA and 504 and Student Study Teams?

Learning goals:

1. Students will be introduced to the concept of special education.
2. Students will understand the differences between SST, RTI, 504 and IDEA.
3. Discuss the factors that influence the decision between 504 and IDEA.

Assigned Reading: Siegel Chapter 2, 6, 7;
IDEA, 504 Comparison

<https://www.education.com/reference/article/section-504-idea-comparison-chart/>.

Guidelines for Student Study Teams,

https://www.dodea.edu/curriculum/specialEduc/upload/DoDEA_SST.pdf

Accommodations and Modifications (2 articles)

<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/treatments-approaches/educational-strategies/the-difference-between-accommodations-and-modifications>

<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/treatments-approaches/educational-strategies/common-classroom-accommodations-and-modifications>

Class Activity: Class discussion

Topics Covered:

- Specialized Instruction
- Eligibility Categories
- Placement, Services, Accommodations and Modifications
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 – FAQ and comparison of differences and similarities with IDEA

WEEK 3: Eligible Child’s entitlement to FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education) in LRE (Least Restrictive Environment)

Learning Goals:

1. Students will understand the concept of FAPE.
2. Students will be introduced to the ideas of procedural and substantive FAPE.
3. Students will model the process for least restrictive environment for a student.

Assigned Reading: Siegel pages 19-22, 302-303;

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) & FAPE

by Pete Wright, Esq. and Pamela Wright, MA, MSW

<http://www.wrightslaw.com/advoc/articles/idea.lre.fape.htm>

How a New Supreme Court Ruling Could Affect Special Education, The Atlantic

<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/03/how-a-new-supreme-court-ruling-could-affect-special-education/520662/>

Class Activity: IEP Simulated Discussion about LRE

Topics Covered

- Procedural FAPE
- Substantive FAPE
- Definition of Least Restrictive Environment
- Determining LRE for a student

WEEK 4: The IEP Process

Learning Goals:

1. Students will understand all the parts of the IEP process and the timelines
2. Students will become familiar with procedural safeguards

Assigned Reading: Siegel Chapters 13 and 14;

US DOE A Guide to the Individual Education Program

<https://ed.gov/parents/needs/special/iepguide/index.html>

Procedural Safeguards Notice

<http://www.wrightslaw.com/idea/law/model.safeguard.form.pdf>

Class Activity: Anatomy of a Compliance Complaint

Topics Covered:

- Tasks/Timelines of the IEP Process
- Prior Written Notice (PWN)
- Compensatory Education
- Compliance Complaints
- Mediation

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- Resolution Session
 - Due Process

WEEK 5: The IEP Document and Special Education Services

Learning Goals:

1. Students will understand the required components of the IEP document.
2. Student will comprehend the significance of the components.

Assigned Reading: Siegel Chapters 4,8,9,12,13,

Understanding the Relevant Parts of an IEP Document by Justin Youngs, Esq.

<http://www.woodsmalllawgroup.com/understanding-the-relevant-parts-of-an-iep-document/>

Class Activity: Hide and Seek, finding components in different areas IEP documents

Topics Covered:

- Parent Concerns
- Categories of Eligibility
- Evaluations
- Present levels of performance
- Special Factors
- Extended School Year
- Accommodations and Modifications
- The importance of documentation and preserving records

Week 6 – Tests and Measurements

Learning Goals:

1. Students will review purpose and use of evaluations—psychological, educational, neuropsychological, psychiatric neurological.

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2. Students will learn how to understand what these evaluations measure and how to apply results to advocacy for individual child.

Assigned Reading:

Comprehensive Assessment and Evaluation of Students with Learning Disabilities,
<http://www.idonline.org/article/54711/>

Assessment 101: Types of Evaluations, Alda Khan, PhD, Wrightslaw (2 parts)

<http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/assessment.part1.khan.htm>

<http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/assessment.part2.khan.htm>

WEEK 7: Basic Advocacy: Written Communications

Learning goals:

1. Students will understand the rule, “if it is not written down it does not exist.”
2. Students will learn to write clear, professional and persuasive letters in advocating for children.

Assigned Reading: “Communicating with Your child’s school through letter writing”, (Please review sample letters at the end)

<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/letterwriting/>

Wrightslaw, “Paper Trails, Letter Writing & Documentation”

<http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/ltrs.index.htm>

Class Activity: Critiquing sample letters

Topics Covered:

- Components of a professional letter
- Writing the ‘right’ amount
- Telling the story
- Writing good evidence letters

WEEK 8: Basic Advocacy: Managing the IEP Conversation

Learning goals:

1. Students will learn a variety of advocacy strategies to use in IEP meetings.

Assigned Reading: Siegel Chapters 10-11

“Summary of Crucial Conversations,”

<https://sloowdown.wordpress.com/2013/06/09/summary-of-crucial-conversations-tools-for-talking-when-the-stakes-are-high-by-kerry-patterson-joseph-grenny-ron-mcmillan-and-al-swizler/>

From School perspective, “Encouraging Active Parent Participation in IEP Team Meetings,”
Diane Marie Dabkowski, <https://www2.bc.edu/alec-peck/Dabkowski.pdf>

“Negotiating Skills for Parents”, Ohio Legal Rights Service

<http://www.middletoncityschools.com/Downloads/NegotiationSkills.pdf>

Class Activity: Simulated IEP Conversation

Topic Covered:

- Image and Presentation
- Agenda Control
- Preparation
- Organization
- Meaningful Parental Participation
- Informed Consent

Class Assignment: Students will be given information to create a letter documenting an event to a district on behalf of a family

WEEK 9: Spotting and researching legal Issues

Learning goals:

1. Students will learn some basic ways of getting more information about legal issues.
2. Students will understand the concept of unlicensed practice of law.

Assigned Reading: Siegel Chapters 14

Class Activity: Spotting legal Issues

Topic Covered:

- Spotting Legal Issues
- Dear Colleague Letters from OCR and OSEP
- Letters of Finding from OCR