

Back-to-School Butterflies? Tips for Parents to Ease YOUR Anxiety



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AUTISM SOCIETY OF MARYLAND
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Autism Society

Maryland | Howard | Montgomery | Anne Arundel

Family Advocacy and Parent Education Program

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don't panic— there's still time to . . .



- get organized
- review the IEP
- create a communication log
- share information
- ask questions
- get involved



Organize the Paperwork

- binder
- folder
- digital file
- new folder in your email for “school 2024-25”

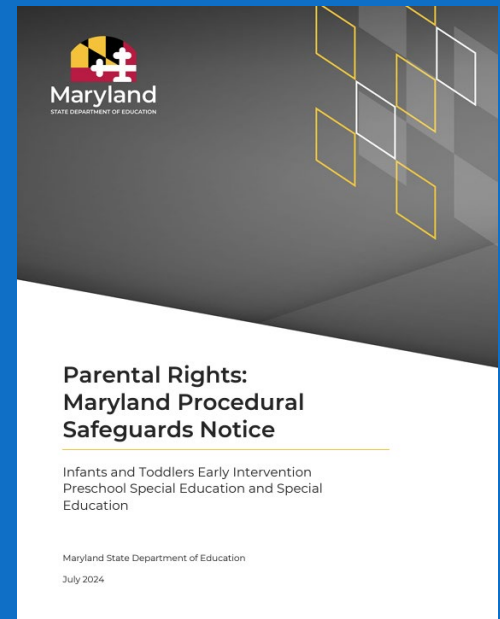
choose a system that works for *you* and you’ll be more likely to use it

Important documents for your binder

- **Communication with school staff**
- Evaluations (including your consent to evaluate)
- Current IEP
- Prior Written Notice (meeting notices and meeting minutes)
- Report cards, progress notes, grade-level assessment scores
- Behavior Intervention Plan and behavior notes/data
- Procedural Safeguards Handbook **7/1/2024** (offered at IEP meetings)

Parental Rights: Maryland Procedural Safeguards Notice

NEW: July 2024



Maryland-Procedural-Safeguards-Notice-A
PDF ([MARYLANDPUBLICSCHOOLS.ORG](https://www.marylandpublicschools.org))

Consider a communication log

Date:		<input type="checkbox"/> Phone	<input type="checkbox"/> Email	<input type="checkbox"/> Letter	<input type="checkbox"/> In person
Who initiated:	Who participated, received, or attended:				
What prompted the communication:					
What was discussed:					
What was decided:					

Follow up phone calls with an email

- Written communication documents the discussion for further consideration

“Thank you for the conversation this afternoon and your offer to revise the daily communication sheet. I’ll look forward to receiving the new sheet by Friday as you mentioned. I really appreciate your help!”

“Thank you for calling me to tell me about the incident in PE today. I just wanted to make sure I had the details correct. Charlie came to PE and seemed upset. He was screaming and saying he needed a drink of water. Ms. Clarke, the para, said he would have to wait until lunch. This triggered Charlie and he was unable to participate at all. Is that correct?”

Review your child's current IEP



- important dates
- “present levels” in the IEP
- current needs
 - do the goals “fit”?
 - are the accommodations up to date?

Section I. (p. 1) -- dates

IEP Annual Review Date: 08/31/2023 ←

Parent was provided a copy of the *Procedural Safeguards Parental Rights*.

The parents were provided a verbal and written explanation of the parents' rights and responsibilities in the IEP team process.

The parents were provided verbal and written information about access to habilitative services, including a copy of the Maryland Insurance Administration's Parents' Guide to Habilitative Services.

Native Language Translation: Parent Informed? Yes No N/A

Projected Annual Review Date: 08/31/2024 ←

Most Recent Evaluation Date: 09/13/2021 ←

Projected Evaluation Date: 09/13/2024 ←

Primary Disability: Autism

Areas affected by disability: Early Learning Skills

Section II. – present levels

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (MSDE) DIVISION OF SPECIAL

EDUCATION/EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES (Form approved by MSDE for use July 11, 2023)

Name: [REDACTED]

Agency: Anne Arundel County Public Schools

IEP Team Meeting Date:

Reading - Comprehension

Document student's academic achievement and functional performance levels in academic areas, as appropriate.

Source(s): Progress Reports

Current Instructional Grade Level Performance: Beginning/Middle of First Grade

(Consider multiple data sources including: Individualized assessment results, classroom based assessments, district assessments, classroom based observations, parent information, student input and general education teacher input in relevant areas.)

Instructional Grade Level Performance Trend Data (document the student's rate of growth over the past two years):

School Year	Instructional Grade Level Performance
2022-2023	Middle of Kindergarten

Summary of Assessment Findings (Including dates of administration): Progress is based on data collected between January 18, 2024, and April 5, 2024. Data was collected during one-on-one instruction outside of the

Goal: After repeated readings of a fiction or non-fiction text that has been chunked, when provided with visual

Objective 1: After repeated readings of a fiction or non-fiction text that has been chunked, when provided with

Does this area impact the student's academic achievement and/or functional performance? Yes No

Section III. – accommodations

Individualized Education Program (IEP)					
Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)			III. Special Considerations And Accommodations		
Division Of Special Education/Early Intervention Services (Form approved by MSDE for use July 1, 2020)					
Name: _____			Agency: The Howard County Public School System IEP Team Meeting Date: 04/21/2021		
Supplementary Aids, Services, Program Modifications And Supports					
Service Nature	Service Description Anticipated Frequency	Begin Date	End Date	Duration	Provider(s)
Instructional Supports					

Instructional supports

Program modifications

Social/behavior supports

Physical/environmental supports

Are agreed-upon accommodations in place?

If accommodations are not provided, students are not receiving FAPE.

Schools are responsible for providing a **free and appropriate public education**. “Appropriate” for your child is determined by the IEP.

Supplementary Aids & Supports / Accommodation Examples

Extended time

Timer

Non-conditional breaks

Visual daily schedule

Task list

Yes / No response card

Immediate feedback

Agenda book

Checklists

Daily check-in/check-out with
case manager

Program Modification Examples

Alternative textbooks

Alternative content

Fewer problems

Revised assignments

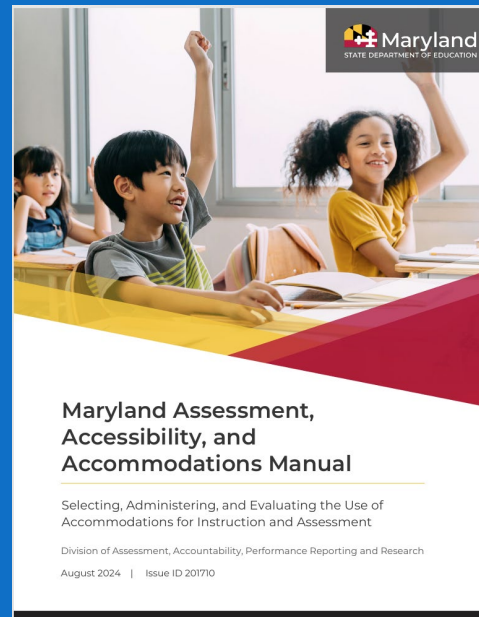
Different method of
instruction

Picture books

Hints/clues to correct
responses

Modified materials to be
more developmentally
appropriate

Maryland Assessment, Accessibility, and Accommodations Manual (MSDE, 2024)



<https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Special-Ed/IEP/MAM508102017.pdf>

Does the IEP “fit” your child’s current needs?

- The IEP identifies special education and related service supports needed for a student with a disability — **are revisions necessary?**
- If you believe the current IEP needs revision, **request an IEP meeting.**
- **An interim IEP meeting** (45-days, 60-days after school year begins) may be helpful to schedule in advance, especially if new school

Communicating with teachers



- What to communicate
- How
- When
- With Whom

WHAT to communicate

- **Introductory letter to the teacher(s)**
- Narrow down your list to top 5 things
- Most important things to know for first week
- Why are these things essential to know?



WHAT to communicate

- Autism [disability] affects children in different ways. Provide specifics on how your child's disability affects them.
- **Accommodations that are essential and why (important for ALL teachers, especially general educators)**
- Anything going on at home that may affect your child's learning (social emotional needs affect learning)

WHAT to communicate

- Child's strengths
- Child's interests
- What motivates your child
- What your child needs help with
- Strategies that work

Understood.org 3x3x3

Get to know me

Name: _____

Teacher: _____

Strengths

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Challenges

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Strategies

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



ELLIE STAFFORD
AGE 5
KINDERGARTEN

Teach me to soar and I will
-Kelle Hampton

VISION STATEMENT

We envision our daughter living a life of choice. We envision her having relationships she feels are valuable. In her future we envision her doing work that she enjoys and that makes her feel productive. We envision our daughter living a happy and meaningful life surrounded by love and support.

STRENGTHS

- Visual learner
- Advanced Reader
- Knows ABC's and Letter Sounds
- Can count to 30
- Social and Kind
- Funny
- Smart
- Great Friend
- Fast Learner
- Excellent Memory

WHAT DOESN'T WORK

- Being Rushed
- Sudden Change in Activity
- Negative Talk
- Yelling
- Assuming I Don't Understand

I LOVE: My Parents, My Brothers Will and Luke, Taco Bell, Dancing and Rap Music.

WHAT WORKS FOR ME

- Patience
- Peer Modeling
- Schedule and Routines
- First/Then Visuals
- Picture Cues for Tasks
- Believe in My Abilities
- Praise Me For My Achievements
- Warn Me About Transitions

WHAT I'M WORKING ON

- Talking in Sentences
- Fine Motor Skills, like Writing, Cutting Paper and Coloring!
- Gross Motor Skills, like Running!
- Following Directions
- Conversational Speech

Back-to-school update

My child's name: _____ My name: _____

My email and/or phone: _____

Last year's school experience

Last year, my child (check all that apply):

- Made friends Worked independently Had a mostly positive experience
 Struggled socially Needed support Had a mostly negative experience
 Other: _____

Strategies that helped my child learn: _____

Other comments? Questions? _____

Strengths and challenges

My child is good at or enjoys (reading, science, art, etc.) _____

My child needs help or has a hard time with _____

Last year, my child struggled with (check all that apply):

- Anger Frustration Anxiety Feeling sad or depressed
 Following rules Focus Talking to teachers
 Sleep Other: _____

Other comments? Questions? _____

Other things to know

It's important for my child's teacher to be aware that _____

Other comments? Questions? _____

Back-to-school worksheet to start the year strong

Help your child fill out this worksheet. Looking back at the past year can help you and your child talk about what they learned that can help them in the new year.

Schoolwork

Looking back...

What did you like best about the past school year? Why?

What was hardest for you at school the past year? Why?

Looking ahead...

What are you looking forward to about the new school year?

What do you want your new teachers to know about you?

Feelings and friendships

Looking back...

What helped you make new friends or get along with classmates?

What helped you when you got frustrated, distracted, or anxious?

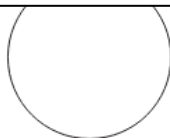
Looking ahead...

What are you looking for in a friend?

What strategies do you want to try this year to help when you're upset?

Hi! My name is: _____

I liked to be called: _____



This is me

This school year, I'm looking forward to:



My favorite subject in school is:

Because:



I want my new teacher to know:



When I'm not at school, I like to:



Sometimes I need extra help with:



Hi! My name is: _____

I like to be called: _____

This school year, I'm looking forward to:

When I'm not at school, I like to:

My favorite subject in school is

because:

Sometimes I need extra help with:

- _____
- _____
- _____

I want my new teacher to know:

WHAT to communicate

“Share the little things that you do for your child at home. For example, if the student needs help with toileting or opening food items. Or, if there are any sign approximations that would be helpful for staff to understand.”

“Share prompts that are helpful—verbal, visual, gestural. Share social stories and strategies that are helpful. Share, share, share!”

HOW to communicate

- Email
- Phone for sensitive conversations
- Informal meeting
- IEP meeting
- Parent portal (e.g., Parent Vue, Class Dojo)

Early on, it's a good idea to ask teachers how they generally prefer to be contacted and how quickly parents should expect a reply.

WHEN to communicate

Communicate early—touch base before students return

If you have questions or concerns after the first day of school, it's ok to ask them. (Of course the first week of school will have bumps for kids, parents, *and* teachers!) Do not wait until there is a crisis to communicate, but also be realistic as everyone is getting settled.

Communicate during school hours (schedule emails to send at 8am)

WITH WHOM to communicate

- Direct email to your child's teacher(s) instead of group emails initially
- Communicate directly with the general educator(s) as well as the special educator
- Copy the case manager
- Consider related service providers (school psychologist, nurse, speech teacher) and what they may need to know specific to their role



Be open minded.

While things may have not gone well the year before, give your teacher a chance to try new strategies or adapt techniques to fit your child's needs.

Partner with your teacher— together come up with a plan when new strategies are needed.



Be positive.

Your attitude matters—to teachers and to your child (and/or children)

Keep your expectations high

Participate in school meetings and activities, volunteer, chaperone—get involved in the school community

Give your child and teachers time to adjust



Keep the lines of communication open as everyone settles back in

Tell teachers what is working (not just what isn't)

Acknowledge the challenges teachers are facing too

If **EVERYTHING** is important then **NOTHING** is important

pick your battles

prioritize concerns

consolidate concerns

Back to School 2024 Resources

**Autism Society of America & Nickelodeon –
Back to School Resources**

Understood.org

Back to School Support

[Back-to-school support guide \(understood.org\)](#)

Resources

- Autism Society of Maryland—offices in Anne Arundel, Howard, and Montgomery County
- Parents Place of Maryland (ppmd.org)
- Disability Rights Maryland (disabilityrightsmd.org)
- Maryland State Department of Education

- Understood.org
- Wrightslaw.com

Resources

Family Support and Resource Center Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee (SECAC)

Partners for Success



Contacts:

Catherine Tolman (PreK - Age 21)
ctolman@aacps.org

Barbi Chapman
bchapman@aacps.org

Point Pleasant Resource Center
1450 Furnace Avenue
Glen Burnie, MD 21060
410-424-3258

Anne Arundel County

Family Support & Resource Center

The Family Support and Resource Center is designed to help families of children with special needs. Services include workshops, IEP assistance, IFSP assistance, newsletters, a lending library, facilitation of parent support groups, and community resources and service referrals.

The center is open during the school year, Monday through Friday, and over the summer by appointment.

To reach the Family Support and Resource Center, email fsrc@hcpss.org or call 410 313-7161.

Howard County

THANK YOU!
Time for Questions 😊



Autism Society

Maryland | Howard | Montgomery | Anne Arundel

410-290-3466

autismsocietymd.org

To request **free** special education support: info@autismsocietymd.org