

3 Questions I Always Ask Our IEP team to Gain Clarity at the IEP Meeting

Alaine: [00:00:00] Welcome to Raising Deaf Kids. I'm your host, Elaine Jacobs. Are you dreading the school year, at least just a little bit, because handling the IEP team feels like a full time job? Do you have anxiety during the school day because you aren't convinced that your child is getting the accommodations and the help at school that they truly need to thrive?

Alaine: I get it, and I have been in not great IEP situations in the past with my kids. And While it does depend a bit on the IEP team as a whole and their willingness to work with you, there are questions that you can ask during the IEP meeting to make sure you, as a parent, have clarity on exactly how your child is going to get help and access to the school curriculum in the school year.

Alaine: So today I'm going to share with you the three questions that I always ask at every IEP meeting to make sure everyone is on the same page and [00:01:00] expectations are clearly laid out. Let's dive in.

Alaine: Hey, welcome to Raising Deaf Kids. Are you tired of spending your precious time after the kids go to bed googling and scrolling Instagram for answers like, how do I learn sign language? Do you feel overwhelmed by all of the decisions that you have to constantly make for your child? Hey, I'm Elaine. I'm a mom of three littles, two of whom are deaf.

Alaine: I remember what it felt like to learn that my child was deaf for the first time. It felt like the rug got torn out from under my feet, and I was falling without a net in sight. How did I get through those crazy early years of learning new ways of life without completely going insane? By creating solid foundations for my child of communication strategies, academic skills, and routines at home.

Alaine: And I can't wait to share it all with you. Together, we're going to build a strong foundation that will support your child and [00:02:00] help them thrive. So put down that to do list, close out that ASL app for now, and let's get started.

Alaine: Did you know that I have a free community of parents just like you? Busy parents who want to parent their child with more confidence while still

getting all of the things done in the house each day. In our community, we share strategies to help our kids learn language faster, a no sweat approach to the IEP, and we lean on each other for support and encouragement in this up and down journey of hearing loss with your kids.

Alaine: If you haven't found your community yet, then welcome home. Come join us at [facebook.com/group/raisingdeafkids](https://www.facebook.com/group/raisingdeafkids).

Alaine: Hey everyone. So if you're watching this on YouTube and you notice in my background, all these toys that are in my bedroom, which is where I record this podcast from. We are currently going through an end of the year, well, end of the summer, beginning of school year, toy clean out and organizing, [00:03:00] and it's all ending up in my bedroom because if not, the kids keep taking out the toys that they actually don't play with and like insisting that they play with them.

Alaine: So that's what that pile is here for. You know, I don't have fancy backgrounds. I keep it real. I'm a mom of three little kids, just like you are. And we do toy cleanouts, you know, before at least every Christmas. So anyway, that's just a little aside. That's not about the podcast at all today. Today, I'm here to talk to you about the IEP team.

Alaine: And you know, I can't believe that we're already back to school already. At least at the time that I'm recording this episode my boys are getting ready to go back to school tomorrow at the beginning of August. They go back a little bit earlier and, you know, I don't know about you, but it felt like the summer really flew by.

Alaine: We had so much fun. But yesterday, actually, at the time of recording this, I took my boys you know, to their school open house and my 6 year old. [00:04:00] He's going to be repeating kindergarten this year. So we went for kindergarten open house and then went back later to take my 8 year old who's going into 3rd grade and went to meet his teacher.

Alaine: So it was like a whole day of back to school open house and it was so much fun. You know, what the fun part was, was meeting the new teachers, obviously, but reconnecting with our fantastic IDP team and you know, reconnecting with. My 6 year old teacher of the desk at his school, you know, who we hadn't seen most of the summer and it was really nice to catch back up with her here.

Alaine: How her summer went and their speech therapist and their. E. C. teacher and the assistance and everyone. All of the IEP team a special needs team who cares for my boys all year long. And we've really become attached to each other, to be honest. And it was just really nice seeing them again.

[00:05:00] And honestly, I have to bribe a little bit about my school and my kids IEP team, because we have a first class IEP team now. However, that was not always my experience with my boys. So when my boys were in a different school, when they were in preschools, the IEP didn't go as smoothly in those situations. And I felt like I was constantly having to educate and advocate for what my kids needed to who I felt like were, you know, Professionals and should know better what they're doing because they went to school for this and I didn't right.

Alaine: I'm I went to school for education. I was a high school teacher, but I was not a high school. You know, special ed teacher or speech therapist. You know, so that wasn't my wheelhouse and this was their wheelhouse. Yet. I felt like I was constantly having to educate and teach them how to help my son, especially my 6 year old who signs.

Alaine: And does not communicate verbally so I really get it if you [00:06:00] are kind of feeling frustrated about the IEP or just overwhelmed by it. It is a lot and I get it. I get being frustrated and I get worrying a little every day when you drop your kid off at school and wondering if your child is actually learning all day long if they're actually understanding the information and the school is presenting the information in a way to them that they can That they understand, and honestly, it's a really desperate way to feel and I'm so sorry if you're feeling that way right now, and hopefully with this podcast episode, we're going to work through this a little bit for you.

Alaine: And one of the first steps to navigating through the IP process is to make sure that you as a parent have clarity at the IP meeting of exactly how your child is going to be helped this year. And even though I now in this school that we are currently at have a fantastic IEP team around my kids and they make my job super easy as a parent, I still [00:07:00] ask these three questions, so I'm getting ready to go over you at every IEP meeting that we have. Because during the course of an IEP meeting, we talk about a lot of things, and we throw out, you know, different ideas between me and the IEP team about, you know, how to help my kids with accommodations that we should have. And sometimes asking these questions helps me to personally understand everything that we talked about, and to give me clarity on what was actually the final decision that we made for the school year so that I can, you know, synthesize all of it in my head.

Alaine: And I think that that would be really helpful for you too, because I know one of the things I hear from parents like you guys a lot is that the IEP process is overwhelming, which it is IEP teams often go through the IEP meeting quickly because they're used to it. This is what they do all the time.

Alaine: They use lingo that we, as parents, don't always know or understand, right? Simply because we haven't been taught. And so we don't [00:08:00] always know maybe what, they're talking about an IEP meeting, and I am with you because I have done this before in the past. I've just been doing this for several years now.

Alaine: So I've kind of learned from my mistakes in the past. But I know I used to come out of IEP meetings, like, having no idea what we actually decided on because I didn't, like, understand what they were saying and they were going so fast. So that's why I started asking these three questions now.

Alaine: Potentially, you can ask a lot more questions in the IEP meeting, and you should, but I think these three questions are really core to you and the team, both having clarity and being on the same page about what exactly is in the IEP, in the IEP for your child, and how the team is going to help your child in school that year.

Alaine: So if you don't ask any questions at all, Make sure you ask these three questions. I promise they'll help you as a parent understand [00:09:00] what was going on a little bit better and get clarity about what accommodations and services your child is actually going to experience and we'll help the IEP team. I've have that. You know, have backed up, look at everything as well. You know, go ahead, grab a pencil and paper if you need it. And let's go ahead and here are the three questions that you should ask at every IEP meeting. So number one question to ask at every IEP meeting is, why did you choose these accommodations for my child?

Alaine: As a follow up, what needs do these accommodations address? So very often the IEP goals That get put into an IEP a lot of times don't matter or aren't needed. Right? So this question kind of helps give a high level of you and kind of sums up for the team and for you as a parent. Okay. Why did we.

Alaine: Intentionally choose these accommodations [00:10:00] and what are they actually doing? What are they actually addressing? And how are they actually going to help my child learn the curriculum and navigate better through the school day, right? And so this kind of helps you think intentionally about what you're actually putting into.

Alaine: IEP. Okay. Also, when you're in an IEP meeting, you and the team can often get in the weeds with all of the nuances and specifics of math goals and how much time and what are like specific goals and then reading goals and you break them down even further. And so asking this question about, okay, why did we choose all these accommodations and what needs do these accommodations address?

Alaine: gives the team a big picture of what we're doing and why we're here, right? And it also keeps your IEP team accountable to actually choose accommodations that have a purpose or are intentional to the school day. And instead [00:11:00] of just putting something in there and just calling it a day and not really helping.

Alaine: So you're really linking those accommodations back to a tactical, like, okay, what do these actually? Help us accomplish during the day. I think that is really important to bring up in the IP meeting. Question number two, ask at your IP meeting, give me an example of what my child's day will look like on a typical school day, but I really like asking this question, this, because this kind of allows me to walk through the school day, hour by hour and make sure that the school day is organized for success for my kids.

Alaine: Make sure that everyone knows where my kids are supposed to be at all times, and I understand, you know, more or less where my kids are supposed to be, and helps us think about how much we're pulling our kids out of the [00:12:00] regular classroom. So, my children, and this might be different for your children, my children have push in services, which means services that happen inside the classroom, and they have pull out services, which means some of their services are one on one outside of the classroom.

Alaine: And so we are always working with the IEP team and their teachers to make sure that we aren't pulling out too much and that they are still having valuable classroom time, time to work with their peers. And that the pullout help is helping but not taking away from too much class time or the classroom experience.

Alaine: And that is a delicate balance between the IEP team and the teaching team. And so asking to give you an example of what your child is going to look like every day kind of helps you and the team. Walk through the day, hour by hour, and make sure that you understand how your child's day is specifically going to go, that everything is, you know, going to be accommodated throughout the day, [00:13:00] and also make sure if they have those pullout services that, you know, they're still getting ample in classroom time as well.

And the third question I would always, always ask at IP meeting is how are we going to monitor progress? And as a follow up, will you let me know when we take assessments for when we take, you know, start monitoring. So this, you know, lets the team think about, okay, how are we going to know if these accommodations are actually working to help my child learn?

Alaine: Okay. And asking this question and asking if you are going to be informed when an assessment is taking place, which, spoiler alert, you should be as a parent, also lets the team know that you want to be in the loop with them during the school year. You want them communicating with you, and you do.

Alaine: You want to know what's going on at school with your child because you are a key part of understanding your child and knowing your child's IEP [00:14:00] team should be referring back to you for suggestions on You know, different things that your child may need during the day because you know your child the best.

Alaine: So you are a really integral part of the IAPT as a parent. And also just practically, schools need data. Okay, schools need the data to show that the accommodations are working. If you're looking at me on YouTube, I'm putting quotes around all of those, right? They need to prove that the accommodations are working.

Alaine: And so they need these assessments periodically anyway, to make sure that you're moving in the right direction. And you should be doing, doing some assessments, maybe You know, once every three months or, you know, even once at this, the semester change right before the semester changes, like, before Christmas break because if you find that the accommodations aren't working, you can, you know, modify those accommodations halfway through the school year.

Alaine: You don't have to [00:15:00] go a whole school year and you should not go a whole school year. You know, just saying, well, my kid isn't learning and you get to the end of the year and find out the accommodations that work, then you've wasted an entire year. That's insane. You can't do that, right? So you need to take an assessment, maybe after the first three months, maybe around like October or even in November, December, right before the semester and evaluate, okay, are these accommodations working, helping my child?

Alaine: And if they're not. How can we switch it up for the next three months or the next half of the school year? So understanding how, once you put these accommodations and services in place, how your team is going to monitor the

progress and actually know if this is working or not is really important and is like I said, in my top three questions that I always ask at the IEP meetings and I think you should be asking too as a parent. So those are my three questions that I always ask at the IEP meeting. And like I said, you are. Welcome to ask many, many more. Ask as many questions as you need to [00:16:00] understand what will be going on with your child during the school year. But if you can't think of any, here are three good ones that will give you some really good clues and clarity on what's going to be going on during the school day with your child.

Alaine: You know, being involved with the IEP meeting isn't, is, like we were talking about earlier, an important part of your role as a parent, right? Especially if you're parenting a younger kid, like I am right now, you know? And you know, you're welcome to invite your kids to the IP meeting. I don't do that right now because my kids would be bored at their ages.

Alaine: But ultimately, you are the parent and making the decision for your kids. And when we talk about kids in middle school and high school, that that dynamic becomes a little bit different because they're older. But if you're parenting younger children, like probably a lot of you are right now, because I am, and that's how I can talk to you.

Alaine: You're an essential part of the IEP team. Okay. You should not just get full reign. And then you have to make sure that you have time over your child's school day and accommodations to the IP team to handle because you are part of the team. [00:17:00] You are the other half. Okay, so it's time as parents that we take our place at the IP table and do our diligence to make sure we understand exactly how the school day is going to go for our kids. And if you're having trouble, if you have questions, if you want about the IP. Meeting the IP process, what to expect. You know, if you want to know even more questions that you could ask at the IP meeting to get more clarity, come into our Facebook group. We would love to help you. We have a bunch of parents in there.

Alaine: Who love supporting each other and encouraging each other. We had parents from. We have all different ages of kids. You've got some parents with older kids who can help you out if you have younger kids. And it's really valuable to come together as a group and really help each other. So you are definitely invited to the Facebook group, facebook.

Alaine: com slash group slash raising deaf kids. Come on in and ask your questions. We'd be more than happy to see you and [00:18:00] help you. I hope this episode today calms your soul a little bit about the IEP, IEP meaning, because I know it can be a little rocky for parents and I understand that I know

as parents we want the absolute best for our kids and unfortunately kids, especially kids with hearing loss, do not come with a handbook.

Alaine: But I want you to know that simply by being here, you are doing a great job as a mom or a parent because you are learning and trying to find better ways to help. Your child. I am so proud of your efforts and I am so glad that you're here. I will see you on Thursday for another chat. Bye.

Alaine: Hey, I hope this episode today blessed you big time. If so, would you take 30 seconds and leave a quick review for the show on Apple Podcasts? It lights me up to know that this podcast is helping you and leaving a review helps other parents to find this podcast too. If you have a friend who needs to hear this podcast episode today, be a pal and text it or share it with them.

Alaine: Now go check off the [00:19:00] rest of your to do list and I'll meet you here every Tuesday and Thursday for podcast episodes to support your whole family in language learning and parenting your deaf and hard of hearing child with confidence. Adios!