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*An initiative of the Illinois State Board of Education, Northern Suburban Special Education District and its Association of Parents and Staff*

Dear Fellow Parent:

As a part of the work that I do in helping parents effectively participate in their child's IEP process, I developed a set of guidelines for writing a parent report. Those guidelines are attached.

It has been my experience, and I would imagine yours as well, that IEP meetings contain a great deal of information to be processed in the moment, and often it is difficult for us to think clearly and voice our completed thoughts and opinions. This is one reason I think it is important for us to prepare a written report in advance of the meeting – so that we take the time to think about and comment on each of our child's goals as well as express our interests for our child overall. In other words, take the pressure off speaking every thought and get some of it down in writing beforehand.

The second reason I think it is so very important to prepare a report in advance is that it provides us an opportunity to prioritize what is truly important to us and our child, and to edit our thoughts to that end. I have come to realize that when I have to respond to something in the moment, and if I am a bit “at sea” in an emotional response as well, I will digress into a long story and often lose my point. Then my point will come back to me several hours after the meeting is adjourned. Again, if we take the time to write those thoughts we know we would like to make in advance of meeting, it will provide us more emotional and mental space to participate in the discussion that comes up in the meeting.

Finally, and most importantly, by providing the members of your child's education team a copy of your report in advance, you provide vital input to help them effectively address your concerns and interests in the IEP meeting.

If you would like to prepare a parent report and don't know how to start, please feel free to call me. I would be happy to help you. If you have a draft that you would like me to review and possibly edit, please feel free to email it to me.

Sincerely,

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